This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

KD
21675

NEDL TRANSFER
HN 3Q6B 0

Digitized by Google

KD
1675

RULES

OF THE

BOSTON LIBRARY.

FRANKLIN PLACE.

Not more than THREE volumes shall be taken out at the same time, and no Books shall be permitted to be taken or used, but by the owner of a share, or his family.

For the first year after the admission of a Book, a fine of ten cents is incurred for each library day it may be kept beyond the time limited on the cover; and, after the first year, of five cents per library day, if detained beyond five weeks; — for abuse of Books, the value thereof when new. If any Book be lost, the same must be replaced by a similar volume, or by paying the current price of a new volume: if it be part of a set, the remainder must be taken, paying the current price of a new set.

THREE DOLLARS assessment must be paid previous to the delivery of *any Book*, after the annual meeting.

All books must be returned to the Library, for inspection, on the Saturday previous to the annual meeting, which is always on the second Friday of May; the fine for non-compliance is one dollar.

Books must be called for by their numbers, and not by their titles.

The LIBRARY is opened every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday afternoons, from 3 to 6 in summer, and 3 to 5 in winter; — also, every Saturday forenoon, from 10 to 1 o'cl'k.

No person shall be allowed to go within the railing, or to take down any Book, without the written permission of two Trustees.

The present price of a share is 25 dollars.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

NAOMI;

OR

103.83

BOSTON TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

BY

ELIZA BUCKMINSTER LEE,

AUTHOR OF THE "LIFE OF JEAN PAUL."

SECOND EDITION.

BOSTON:

WM. CROSBY AND H. P. NICHOLS,

111 WASHINGTON STREET.

1848.

Digitized by Google

KD
21675

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1847, by
WM. CROSBY & H. P. NICHOLS,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

CAMBRIDGE:
METCALF AND COMPANY,
PRINTERS TO THE UNIVERSITY.

Digitized by Google

PREFACE.

I HAVE endeavoured in the following pages to preserve, as much as was in my power, an exact justice between the two parties; to present the bigoted age, the limited views, the deep provocation, and the stern justice of our forefathers in their dealings with the Quakers; while, on the other hand, I have not concealed the audacity, the determined perseverance, and the spiritual pride of those illiterate Quaker women who came to this country as much to gain notoriety as from a sincere desire for martyrdom. That such was the case in particular instances in no degree impairs the simple and sublime truth of the Quaker doctrine of "the inward light."

Although some of the actors are fictitious, no incident is introduced touching the Quakers that did not actually occur in the years through which the events of my story pass. The incidents are real; but that I have preserved the costume and the coloring of the age, I can scarcely hope. To some persons, I am aware, no picture of a particular time,

Digitized by Google

which does not reproduce the exact language and manners of the period, can have much value. Such an attempt requires a long and familiar practice, or a higher order of genius than I can pretend to possess. I have aspired only to take up a humble position upon that which Scott calls the extensive neutral ground of manners and sentiments that are common to us and our ancestors, arising out of the principles of our common nature, and existing alike in both states of society. The difficulty of reproducing even such an imperfect picture of the domestic manners of our ancestors, where hints are to be gleaned in the records of probate-offices and the invoices of vessels, will, I trust, appeal to the candor of my readers to pardon the presumptuous attempt.

E. B. L.

December 1, 1847.

Digitized by Google

NAOMI:

OR BOSTON TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

CHAPTER I.

"Look now abroad, — another race has filled
These populous borders; wide the wood recedes,
And towns shoot up, and fertile realms are tilled;
The land is full of harvests and green meads."

BRYANT.

LET us ascend one of the many elevated spots in the vicinity of Boston; we look around upon a beautiful panorama of protecting hills, now dotted with sheltered and cultivated farms, — garden farms, like that of Eden; then gaze a moment upon the continued chain of towns that have not yet lost the white gloss of newness, and that, like a shining silver fringe, encircle the skirts of the hills. Then, as the eye rests upon the modest towers where science and learning dwell, or is lifted to the iron walls where Christian love ministers to the broken spirit (however much we may wish the several positions reversed, — that the torch of science were lighted upon the hill-tops, and the darkened mind and broken spirit sheltered in the valley), the soul is yet filled with gratitude. We feel the throbbing of the air and the trembling of the ground as the frequent engine shoots arrowy by, leaving its long trail of

Digitized by Google

smoke, and the sharp vibration of its whistle on the ear. With an effort, we recollect that scarcely two centuries ago this varied picture was all one unbroken forest, — in the language of the time "a howling wilderness," — all but a few little scattered specks, where the smoke of human habitations rose in the twilight air; and we feel awed by the power of the giant Time, who, as he has trodden lightly or heavily over the two centuries, has wrought these changes and left these marks of his footsteps.

At the period when the incidents that fill the following pages occurred, Boston had been settled just thirty years. At the point of the peninsula, in the crescent between its two protecting hills, nestled the little prosperous town, sheltered on the north by its beautiful green eminence, with its undulating line of summit, that gave it the name of Trimountain; while, separated by the expanding mouth of the royal Charles, the twin town of Winnisimmet, beautifully planted on the opposite heights, was seen clinging to the hill-side.

Thirty years had passed since the arrival of Winthrop and his company. Although they surmounted undreamed-of hardships, almost miraculous prosperity had attended their pious enterprise. Both Copps and Fort Hills were now well fortified; the former being well mounted with heavy artillery, the latter protected by a strong battery made of the giant trees of the ready forest. Upon the third, the green eminence already mentioned, was placed a beacon, ready to be lighted at the approach of danger. The little settlement, sheltered in the lap of these three hills, had already assumed the appearance of a considerable and very active and enterprising town. It is true that no steeple yet rose above, pointing the thoughts heavenward, but many goodly houses had been built. The streets within the crescent formed by the two projecting

Digitized by Google

eminences were narrow and winding, laid out apparently as convenience dictated paths to the first settlers; but beyond, towards Beacon Hill and the isthmus, or Neck, "were many beautiful squares for gardens and orchards, with large and spacious houses, some fairly set forth with brick, tile, slate, and stone, and orderly placed, whose continual enlargement," saith Johnson, "presageth some sumptuous city. And these streets were full of boys and girls sporting up and down, with a continual concourse of people." *

One generation of the emigrants had passed away, and slept, not with their fathers in consecrated tombs beneath cathedral domes, nor in green, sheltered grave-yards under Gothic spires that spread their ivy tracery to woo the breezes of England, but in honored graves, beneath the virgin sod, or lulled by ocean waves upon a rocky bed. The honored Winthrop, the Puritan saint, Cotton, the humble-minded Shepherd of Cambridge, the strong-hearted Hooker, had all passed away, — they and those noble women, their wives, — and had carried with them much that had formed the peculiar character, the grace and charm, of the first colonization of Boston Bay. These first settlers brought with them the genial influences, the refining culture, of a high state of civilization. The next generation were sterner and harsher men. They were the sons, born or educated in this less genial soil, of those men who had grown and ripened in England before they set foot upon it, and they partook, perhaps, of the rougher and colder climate. The snow of their exterior, hiding the beautiful vegetation of Christian love, was deeper than that of their fathers, and the rock required repeated strokes to bring forth the sparkling waters of refreshing grace.

* Johnson's description of Boston in 1657.

Digitized by Google

The children of the first settlers, the first generation born upon the soil of New England, grew up in the absence of all those beautiful, humanizing, and softening influences that belonged to the mother land. Their first experience of life was a sombre and cold climate, a hard, rocky, and sterile soil. The wealth brought by their fathers had been expended in providing the first means of living, the necessary wants of that first colonization ; and, although they began immediately again to accumulate riches with the aid of a most prosperous commerce, the first generation experienced from infancy many hardships, and acquired a character of stern resistance, an intrepid boldness and unwearied perseverance in contending with outward circumstances. They grew up, also, in the absence of all those influences that fill the mind with the sentiment of loyalty, perhaps the most graceful of all sentiments, as it gives dignity to the humility with which we regard the object of our loyal affection. Reverence for God, reverence for law, took the place of the sentiment of loyalty. Here was no court, no monarch, no pageantry of rank or power, no imposing church nor bishop ; and, as a boy advanced into manhood, there was nothing above him but the broad heavens, nothing around him but law and order, to which his proud spirit must bend and subject itself.

The genial influences of antiquity, also, were lost to the second race born in New England, as they have been for all succeeding generations here. The venerable cathedral, the old gray abbeys, the mouldering monuments, the consecrated church-yards, the old stone cross guarding the consecrated spring or fountain, — all these ancient symbols, all that way-side poetry of life that met the wanderer at every step in England, were wholly lost here. Only the grand and ever-eloquent features of nature could

Digitized by Google

here speak to the soul. The immensity of the ocean, and the savage solitudes of the forest, — they gave a stern elevation to the character; but none of those graceful wreaths and tendrils of what is symbolical and poetical in antiquity and in life adorned the stern Puritanism of the New England character.

England, too, at this time deserved the epithet of "Merry England." Fairs, merry-makings, games, and sports were constantly recurring in the mother land. The old maskings, the Christmas games, the thousand quaint devices and amusements of fairs, the harvest-home, the May-pole and festival, Punch and Judy, the Merry-Andrew, — all were cut off from the youthful mind in this country. Life was stripped at once, as with an iron hand, of all gayety, as we see the gay, flowering weeds of a summer morning cut down with one swoop of the scythe.

All these circumstances, and many others which I cannot mention, account for that remarkable modification which took place in the character of the second generation, or rather in the first born upon the soil, and that has transmitted its deep coloring to their descendants in New England even to the present day. They account for the added austerity and bigotry of that and the next generation; and the consideration of all these genial influences, at once stripped away, should mitigate the severity of our judgment when we look upon their narrow views, their severity towards those who differed from them, and their apparent cruelty to the Quakers. Life, as we have seen, was robbed at once for them of the softening influences of antiquity, of the sentiment of loyalty and reverence of those of higher rank, of the genial effects of gayety and social amusements, and of all the beautiful poetry of existence spread like wild-flowers upon the rough granite of life; and what did they receive as a

Digitized by Google

compensation? They were the chosen people, the favorites of the Most High. They had been led into the wilderness by the Almighty, to do and to suffer for a peculiar work, a most holy purpose, — to preserve the true faith once delivered to the saints, and to found a church perfect in doctrine and in practice. They, like the Jews of old, were to be a peculiar, a chosen people. The cloud and the pillar of fire were to guard them by day and by night. Not civil, but religious, bondage was the result. They had suffered the hardships, they had borne the heat and burden of the day, to earn the privilege of sitting down at evening, under the shadow of their own vine and their own fig-tree, to worship God in their own way, to have the Most High draw near and to sit down in intimate communion with Him. Thus all who disturbed their worship were aliens and enemies, to be thrust out from among them; heathen, to whom the whole country was wide enough, but from whose incursions their own little inclosure was shut and barred.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II.

"Before these fields were shorn and tilled,
Full to the brim the rivers flowed;
The melodies of waters filled
The fresh and boundless wood;
And torrents dashed, and rivulets played,
And fountains spouted in the shade."— BRYANT.

LET us go back in imagination to a September afternoon in the year 1660. The season and the hour was one of almost unparalleled beauty. It was the first day of September. Nature had put off her bridal robes, and assumed the paler and faded tints of widowhood, preparatory to the gorgeous drapery with which she would celebrate a few weeks later the funeral of the year. A cloudless sky and a deep repose rested upon the earth, and seemed to brood over the calm waters of the bay. The trees of the hundred islands with which it is studded, not then, as now, stripped of their native forests, caught the rays of the declining sun in their topmost branches, while the light scarcely penetrated the close undergrowth beneath. The sails of many small vessels, coming up with the evening tide, shone snowy white upon a darker background, and the setting sun glanced in diamond drops from the paddles of an Indian canoe, as it shot from island to island. Much of the little town lay in deep shadow as

Digitized by Google

well as repose, built as it was close upon the water, beneath the protection of its armed heights, while the outstretched curtain of its Trimountain was assuming the gray tints of an autumn afternoon.

But the object of most intense and absorbing interest to the groups of citizens collected upon the summit of the most eastern eminence was a large and gallant ship, that had long been looked and prayed for from the mother country, and now at length, as the winds had fallen and there was a perfect calm, was coming slowly up with the evening tide. This ship was freighted with many hopes, and not without fears, for every family of the little town. It was expected, also, to confirm the rumors that had reached the colony of the restoration of Charles the Second. Perhaps even the regicides, no longer safe in England, would flee for safety to this country, and had taken refuge in that very ship.

Some rude benches had been placed upon the hill, and there were seated many of the elders of the town ; some with spy-glasses at their eyes, all with a composed gravity of mien, concealing under the cold exterior of Puritan asceticism the excited feelings and the variety of passions that they in common with other men possessed. The costume of that period was not, like that of the present day, a stiff and uniform outline of dark broadcloth ; the gravest gentlemen of the period, in conformity to the picturesque fashions of the time of the Charleses, wore ample cloaks of velvet, turned out with some brilliant color, and over them the broad collars of lace called vandykes, and bands of the same material. The Puritan high-crowned hat was just beginning to give place to the beaver, turned up at the side, with plumes and gold lace. Swords were worn by gentlemen, and rings upon their hands.

Digitized by Google

Perhaps there never was a time when the distinctions of rank were greater. The artisans and men of the lower classes formed a contrast indeed, with their doublets of untanned leather, or of a coarse cloth called drugget; and as they mixed with the other groups, they formed a line of distinction of ranks infinitely wider than, indeed unknown, at the present day. Groups, somewhat more lively in exterior bearing, were scattered at intervals, conversing in low tones, and the children, just released from school, were playing their childish games with an almost ludicrous gravity under the severe eyes of their elders, while the shrill treble of a young voice would sometimes rise above the subdued tone of the general conversation.

It is impossible for us at this distant day to enter into the feelings of intense and varied interest with which the different groups collected upon the hill-side watched and hailed the vessel whose white sails had been filled with the breezes of England, that mother land for which they all yearned; not that they came here, as other colonists have gone to other shores, to acquire the means of returning to spend their hard-earned wealth where their hearts had always remained. The chain that attached them to the mother country remained bright as ever; but they knew that they should find their graves, as well as their homes, in this. England had not yet done any thing to estrange them from her. Their hearts yearned towards her, as the settlers in the Far West look back to the firesides of their New England homes, where mothers, sisters, friends, and lovers still rivet their earliest and dearest memories. They identified themselves with England; her history was theirs, her literature was theirs. They had fled only from the hierarchy and the priesthood. The king, the exile king, was again theirs. From Eng-

Digitized by Google

land came their preachers and their teachers, their garments, their fashions, their news, their opinions; the heart of England, with every beat, sent the warm blood tingling to the very extremities of these colonies.

There was scarcely one among all these groups who had not some nearly connected relative, some patron or some dependant, some closely allied friend, in the mother country,—son or daughter, brother or lover, from whom their hearts thirsted for the long-delayed tidings. England and Boston were then like the two ends of the magnetic telegraph; the stroke at the one end trembled through the whole distance, and made its distinct impression at the other extremity. Vessels of every description were constantly passing and repassing between the colony and the mother country; yet, on account of a long continuance of contrary winds, it was now some time since any news had been received from thence.

The various groups collected upon the hill had each different, but equally absorbing, interests in the tidings of the approaching ship. In the preceding July, the colonists had affected to doubt the restoration of the royal family; but now it was too certain, and they feared the swarms of enemies that would gather round the new government. The elders were anxiously discussing the effect which the return of King Charles would have upon their trade and commerce. Little hope was entertained that his authority would be as favorable to them as that of the Long Parliament, or as indulgent as that of Cromwell. Besides, they drew their knit brows together and whispered of the *Quakers*. The royal judge had decided, that, in all criminal cases, appeal should be made to England; how, then, would the news of their scourgings and mutilations, even the hanging, of the Quakers be received there? But even at this early period, in those stern and

Digitized by Google

knit brows might be seen the determined opposition of these men to any interference that would rob them of the power of dealing with their own heretics. No, Satan, the father of lies and of heresies, was their especial criminal; their own discipline was the only discipline that would do for him; and it had never dawned upon their minds that toleration could ever be the means of reformation for so dark a culprit.

They were conversing, in some of the groups, of the various annoyances and insults lately received from the Quakers. The very last Sabbath Mr. Wilson had been insulted in his own pulpit. Then whispers went round, that, in that very ship now approaching, some of the escaped regicides were concealed, and seeking a more secure asylum in this country, where there would be little fear of discovery.

"Yes," said an aged man, thrusting his cane with force upon the ground, "if Charles takes our enemies under his protection, we will retaliate; we will keep his safe from his vengeance. He shall never lay his royal finger upon a single regicide who throws himself into our safe-keeping."

"No," said another deep, determined voice, "let the royal commissioners beat the forests in vain; no dastardly treachery will be found on this side the water."

"Well," said a gentleman that looked like the school-master, "the Council will now give orders for a coronation, and the school-boys will get a holiday. They and I will be the only gainers in our poor little town by the return of his most gracious Majesty."

"Poor, do you call it?" cried another; "thirty years ago but two smokes arose in this whole place, — there and there," pointing with his cane to the spots; "the path between the two cabins was made by the cow pass-

Digitized by Google

ing through the brushwood from door to door to give milk to the young children, — the water from the springs was sweet enough for men; and now look at the goodly wharves and warehouses, the masts and shipping, the fisheries stretching across the flats, the loaded ferry-boats; and where will you see more spacious dwellings than the governor's and Sir Harry Vane's? No, no, Charles has not a brighter gem in all his coronet than this little town of Boston."

"No thanks to him nor his father that it is set in it," cried another; "but let us keep it bright."

While these good citizens of Boston were exercising the talent for which their successors have continued to be distinguished, that of commending the gem of Massachusetts Bay, lower down upon the hill a group of young women stood apart, their fair complexions showing their English descent; but they had been long enough in this climate of extreme variation of temperature to lose that appearance of robust health, that ruddy complexion, which distinguished them at home. That too frail delicacy of appearance was just beginning to show itself, which is the gift of our climate, inducing an early beauty and a too early fading and withering of that delicate beauty. Hoods of black velvet or silk, confined closely under the chin, and through which the face peered as through a cage, and an amplitude of skirts even greater than at the present day, showed that the more seductive fashions of the reign of the second Charles had not yet been adopted by the New England dames.

"We shall have some new brocades for our winter wear by this ship," said one.

"And no more sad colors," remarked another; "since Charles and his court have returned, the ladies, I hear, are very gay; all the lovely French fashions that the

Digitized by Google

court learnt at St. Germain are introduced, and Mrs. Gwynn has rare taste in dress."

"Hush!" said another, looking up at the bench above; "you will be heard, and we shall have more sermons upon dress, veils, and long hair. By the way, the court ladies have introduced the fashion of natural curls, hanging all round the head, like those of little girls as they grow naturally, without scissors."

"And no jewels in the hair?" asked another.

"Ah, no! very likely all the jewels of the Royalists went to support the king and his family in their exile."

"And you, Mabel, do you not expect your wedding gear by this vessel? The ring, I hear, came long ago."

The young girl blushed, and some smiles passed round. All smiled but one fair girl, who had taken no part in the discussion, and whose pensive expression of countenance showed that some care weighed upon her mind. "God grant," she sighed, "that I may hear by this vessel!"

"Who knows?" said one of them kindly; "perhaps he has come himself, in this very ship, and will take you back this time as his wife."

"Ah! good by," they added gayly. "Who knows? Invite us to the wedding."

A bright color mounted to the temples of the young girl; but it faded away as soon, and tears rushed to her eyes. The others were silent. They did not intend to wound, and they turned away from witnessing her emotion, while all descended the hill together.

The last rays of the sun had faded from the tree-tops, as the vessel touched the end of Long Wharf, and took its place amid "shipping from Holland, France, Spain, and Portugal, that already crowded the little

Digitized by Google

port." * A carriage, with drawn curtains, that had been waiting on the wharf, was then seen in the dim twilight to drive slowly up through King Street, and turn into the spacious yard and garden of one of the best houses of what was then called the main road, now Washington Street.

It was Saturday evening; the Sabbath had commenced, and the exciting event of the arrival of this long-expected ship created no bustle or noise in this well-ordered religious community. All news, even the reading of letters, must be deferred till after the going down of the sun of the Sabbath that had already commenced. The groups collected in various places were already dispersed, and were winding their solitary steps to their respective abodes. Darkness began to settle over the little town. All shops and places of business were closed. He who had neglected to provide food for the next day, the Sabbath, must fast, for nothing could be purchased after sunset. The boys were now all silent; no youthful voices were heard in the streets; the doors of all houses were closed. The bright rays of the full moon, just rising in sheets of silver over the waters of the bay, were excluded by the shutters of the windows; the streets were deserted; solitude and silence, except the rare footfall of a late-returned wanderer, reigned without, and only the voice of prayer was heard within the houses of this Puritan town.

Without, however, the Sabbath seemed to the devout ear most solemn and holy. The place was full of trees, and the night-wind had begun its organ-dirges within their branches; the hushed moonbeams rested upon the waving summits, and marked long shadows upon the fragrant

* Johnson's description of Boston, 1651.

Digitized by Google

earth.* The myriads of insects, aided by the deeper tones of the frogs, began their evening chorus in the solitudes of the Common and under the thickets of Beacon Hill. Their "mysterious psalmody" continued all night long; all evenings were alike sacred to them, and all filled with a sacred concert of praise.

In the vessel that we have just seen approach, and take its place at the wharf, there was one person upon whom we wish to fix the attention of the reader. It was a young lady apparently less than twenty, although the usual calm and composed gravity of her countenance might to a cursory observer have added a few years to her age. As the vessel approached nearer to the land, and threaded among the islands of the bay, there might have been seen upon that usually serene and lovely countenance all the variations of hope and fear, and uncertain, timid expectation. Since land had been called out from the masthead, she had stood upon the taffrail of the vessel, watching with intense curiosity all the changes of the coast, and trying to fix her imagination upon the various localities where she could recall the scenes that she had read and pondered upon with the deepest interest.

Could she not see with her eye, she asked the captain, who stood at her side, could she not see the frozen and slippery rock at Plymouth, and the hemlock wood, laden with snow, where the young mother, pale with terror, held her infant clasped closer to her breast, while her fearful eye sought the wood, expecting a horrible savage to start from the thicket?

Naomi, the soft and Scripture name borne by my heroine, — Naomi Worthington had been nearly an or-

* Winthrop says in his Journal, that when they approached the land, "there came a smell off the shore like the smell of a garden."

Digitized by Google

phan in England. Her mother, when she was ten years old, had married a second time, and accompanied her husband, one of the early Puritan emigrants, to the New World, leaving the little girl with attached and faithful guardians, the relatives of her own father. But Naomi had always yearned for her mother, and had at length obtained leave from her guardians to come to the New World, to meet once more the mother from whom she had been separated nearly ten years.

It required some courage in the poor young girl, for the exaggerated stories of the barbarity of the country had reached her ears, and the New World was indeed to Naomi a strange and savage place. She had heard of horrible Indian warfare, of scalping and burning, of the terrible severity of the climate, of snow-drifts above the roofs of the houses, of the ice-bound coast, and wine frozen solid in the cask. She had read of the hardships of the earliest emigrants, of tender and delicate women dying destitute of the comforts of home, of infants breathing but a few hours the ice-filled air; and as the vessel glided upon a balmy sea, among the beautiful islands of the bay, then filled with verdure, and groves, and singing birds, her wonder and admiration increased beyond measure, and she asked the captain doubtingly, "Is this the new, the savage world?"

As they drew nearer to the crescent of the little town, the sun had set behind the undulating summit of the Trimountain, leaving a brilliant sea of glory in the tree-tops. She could now distinctly see the groups of people; "the happy boys and girls sporting up and down the streets," a characteristic feature of Boston that it has ever since retained; the general appearance of thrift and wealth; the modest houses, divided from each other by orchards and gardens; the narrow and winding streets,

Digitized by Google

ascending here, descending there, that gave an indescribably picturesque beauty to the place; and, lastly, its embracing arms of water, its protecting peninsulas of land, intersecting and encircling each other. "And this earthly paradise," she thought, "and my mother! these are to be my home"; and, overcome with surprise and joy, she melted into tears.

When she descended from the vessel to the wharf, she found the carriage already mentioned waiting for her. No intrusive curiosity, no prying eyes, followed her there. It was, as I have said before, the beginning of the Sabbath, and all were within the walls of their houses. Naomi, as she rode through the street, saw only the deep shadows and the broad masses of moonlight, brighter, she thought, than in England, and heard only the deep choruses of the insects and frogs, till the door of her new home, the door of her step-father's dwelling, closed after her.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III.

"Friends, kindred, comfort, all, they spurned, —
Their fathers' hallowed graves;
And to a world of darkness turned,
Beyond a world of waves." — SPRAGUE.

"What sought they thus afar?
Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas, the spoils of war?
They sought a faith's pure shrine." — HEMANS.

PURITANISM was, as those who embraced it believed, a protest of right against wrong, of good against evil, of heaven against hell; in many it was a true heroism, inspired by holy motives, pursued with devoted energy, purified from all selfish ends, and rewarded with the joys of conscience.

The views and motives that led the Pilgrims and planters to these New England shores were as various and as widely different as the characters of the persons who composed the successive companies. Winthrop and his companions were as true, as pure, as heroic a company as ever set foot upon our sterile and severe coast. They were inspired by deep, conscientious, but yet narrow and mistaken conceptions of religious liberty. They wished to escape persecution in England, but no sooner did the occasion present itself than they became

Digitized by Google

persecutors in their turn ; tolerance for their own opinions was the only tolerance admitted. That tolerance itself implies intolerance was an idea which had never dawned upon the religious mind of the period.

Many came merely to enjoy an untrammelled worship, — to be rid of surplices, and what were to them the idle ceremonies of formalism and the ritual. A very large number came to this country upon commercial speculations, with the hope of making or bettering their fortunes, and yet a larger number with a union of purposes, of which, although none perhaps were of an entirely elevated or disinterested character, yet were none censurable or unworthy.

Included among the latter class was the merchant who was most largely interested in the ship that had just arrived, and whose carriage had been waiting upon the wharf to receive a passenger from the vessel. The reader must not suppose that a carriage was at this time a frequent appendage to a rich man's establishment. There were perhaps half a dozen in the whole country, and the merchant of whom we speak was as able as any one to maintain this luxury.

Mr. Aldersey, to whose house Naomi had been borne, was one of the most wealthy merchants of Boston, although not one of the company who came with Winthrop. At the time of Winthrop's embarkation, he was living in London, and reaping a fortune from one of the extensive monopolies common at that period ; but he was a Puritan, and belonged to the patriot party that opposed all monopolies. He would have gladly remained in the enjoyment of his own, by a connivance in which he should not be known. It was, however, discovered and withdrawn, and he came to hide his mortification in the New World. He returned, however, at the end of a few

Digitized by Google

years, and married. His wife, whom he now brought with him, a lovely and excellent woman, had large connections in England of her own family and of her first husband's (she had been a widow), which made the rending of the ties to the mother country most difficult. Naomi, the little daughter of the first husband, was the darling of many old relatives, who set their hearts and their faces against the proposal of bringing the little girl to the New World. Like Mrs. Wilson, the partner of the reverend gentleman of that name, their imaginations exaggerated the dangers of the sea, the terrors of the savages and monsters that infested the land. Mrs. Aldersey accompanied her husband, therefore, with a divided and bleeding heart, for the little Naomi, a child of nine years old, must be left behind.

Mr. Aldersey had come to the country rich in capital, and his business had been eminently prosperous, and the new cares and new duties of a new country had seemed to suffice for the happiness of his wife; another little girl had also been filling in part the place of the little Naomi in the mother's heart. In part only, for the mother's heart ever yearned for the child across the waves of the Atlantic; a secret and fond hope of uniting the sisters had given to the younger the name of Ruth. "In the future," her mother's heart whispered, "may they say, 'Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.'"

The mother was not destined to behold the union of her children. The relatives of Naomi, especially the guardian appointed by her own father, who had charge of her fortune (for Naomi was an heiress), opposed his authority to her earnest wish to visit her mother. The young girl submitted, but with the firm determination, that, as soon as a few successive birthdays should give her the freedom to act for herself, neither the will of man nor

Digitized by Google

the waves of the Atlantic should separate her from her mother.

She was now nineteen, — two more years must pass before her wishes could be fulfilled ; but the mother's health was failing, and her last letter melted the heart of the obdurate but conscientious guardian. A passage for Naomi, with her maid, had been reluctantly taken in the next vessel for Boston, — the vessel that, after a long-protracted passage, we have seen entering the harbour.

I copy the last letter of the mother, as a specimen of the epistolary style of the period : —

" My dearly beloved daughter, — Ten years have now passed since God, in his wise but unsearchable Providence, separated my precious first-born child from my arms. It was like the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow. But through this tribulation I have been brought to a more humble sense of my own unworthiness ; only through divine grace could my rebellious spirit be brought to entire submission, and only through this chastisement to the patient taking up of my daily cross. Has this trial had its blessed influence upon the soul of my precious child, so that through this tribulation we may be prepared to meet and rejoice together in the kingdom of our Father ?

" Now, my dear child, sorrow and weakness weigheth heavily upon my life, and I feel that, if I see thee not before I go home, my gray hairs will descend with sorrow to the grave. Entreat thy guardian, therefore, to give me the joy to embrace thee before I die.

" I wish, my daughter, to commit thy little sister to thy care. Be to her what I have not been able to be to thee, after the full measure of my boundless love, — but be to her a mother. Let her home be thy home, her country thy country, and may a mother's humble prayer

Digitized by Google

cause the blessing of the Almighty to rest upon both her precious children ! "

Before this letter reached the hand of the daughter, the heart of the mother, perhaps of all human hearts that where dwells the purest flame of love, had ceased to beat ; it rested beneath the New England sod, and mingled its dust with the martyr hearts of the first generation of Pilgrim mothers. The Chapel grave-yard is one of the most hallowed spots in the country. There sleep many tender women, who left the halls of luxury in their noble English homes, the language of whose souls was, — " Whithersoever your fatal destiny shall lead you, either by the furious waves of the great ocean, or by the manifold and horrible dangers of the land, I will surely bear you company. There can no peril chance to me so terrible, nor any kind of death so cruel, that shall not be much easier for me to abide than to live separated from thee."

I have said that Mr. Aldersey did not exile himself to get rid of the hierarchy, the surplice, or the bishops ; he came because he could no longer enjoy the revenues of a monopoly which his party had long condemned, and his principles had barely suffered him to connive at. He was already rich, and the commercial prosperity of the colony under the favorable regard of Cromwell had enabled him to double his fortune since he came to the country.

In this religious community men lived apparently above the world. Religion was lord of their life. To attain any degree of consideration, it was as requisite to be religious as it is now to be honest. Mr. Aldersey had joined the Boston church the first Sabbath after his arrival ; he was a zealous church-member, an Assistant of the General Court, a magistrate, a keen detecter of her-

Digitized by Google

esy in opinion and of latitudinarianism in practice; liberality of judgment in one or the other, with respect to others, was a thing that had never dawned upon his mind, yet he exempted himself from any particular strictness of principle or practice. His great Bible lay open before him on Sunday, and upon its very leaves he wrote his commercial letters. He had obtained secretly, this very Saturday night, news and information of the state of the market in England, which would be imparted to others only on Monday morning, and which enabled him to add some thousands to his property. Yet his family devotions had never been apparently more fervent than upon this very evening, when his thoughts were far away, busied with commercial speculations. He was not, however, an unmitigated hypocrite. He had always been prosperous, and deceived himself into the conviction, that it was the special blessing of God that crowned all his inferior speculations and his fraudulent gains. Such persons are not wholly without excuse. The homage that even the most upright pay to success, to worldly prosperity; the kind of acquiescence that even the best accord to prosperous selfishness; the flattering anticipated epitaph, written upon the countenances of all those who approach the man known to have the most avaricious appetites, but attended with ostentatious charities, — all these deceive him. They know he is the toad ugly and venomous, but they are dazzled by the jewel borne on his front. All this makes the true heart, the discerning spirit, weep, and fear that the great day of justice is yet afar off.

The principles of Christian love, the beatitudes, can never influence society while those mean and grovelling propensities are honored and flattered because wealth and luxury attend them. While the man whose heart is moulded from the downtrodden mire, where serpents

Digitized by Google

have hissed, and swine have rooted, — whose intellect, of coarse flint, is only capable of being struck into light by the hope of gain, — gilded with the trappings of wealth, is placed on high to receive the homage of the world, while the worshipper of truth, the man of pure, unsullied conscience, is thrust aside, or bears the obloquy of public opinion, — such society, whether it be Puritan or orthodox, can never be Christian.

Mr. Aldersey was not ostentatious in his house or his furniture ; he lived, indeed, rather beneath than above his means ; his income constantly accumulated. Ostentation was not then shown in the pride of luxurious living. Boston has retained the stamp that was given it in the first century. Its munificence is displayed at this very day, as it was thirty years after the arrival of the Arbella, in its patriotic and religious charities, rather than in luxurious living.

We are surprised in reading John Dunton's account of his visit to Boston about this period, and also the old records of probate-offices, to find so much of the luxury of furniture and the splendor of their old homes mingled with the rough structures and the numerous deficiencies of accommodation in the New World. Mr. Aldersey's house was on the south side of what is now Washington Street, and was entered through a garden in front ; as the gable end of the dwelling was towards the street, it enjoyed at the same time the advantages of retirement and publicity. The garden, filled principally with vegetables, was divided from the house by a small court paved with smooth pebbles from the sea-beach, and the bank of green before the front-door was filled with English rose-bushes, carefully imported from the mother country. The spacious and most substantial dwelling was rough on the outside, being built of large split logs,

Digitized by Google

the spaces boarded with unplaned boards; the whole, being unpainted, had attained a rich dark wood-color. It was two stories high, with a very deep overhanging roof, with two gables on each surface, forming what is called the Elizabethan style of architecture. The sharp gables admitted each a window. The house was nearly square, but, according to the fashion of the time, each story projected more than half a foot over the one beneath. The front admitted four large windows, two in each story, the lower ones projecting, or what are now called Elizabethan; these were formed of lozenge-shaped glass set in lead, the upper sash being whole and immovable, while the lower opened in the centre upon hinges, like what are called French windows at the present day. They were protected by wooden shutters on the outside, each shutter being secured by a wooden bar.

The interior of this house presented an aspect far more agreeable and polished than the roughness of the outside had promised. The front-door opened into a large hall, having a wide and handsome staircase on the right hand, and opposite the door of entrance a window opening like a door to the ground. This gave admittance at once into a deeply shaded orchard, whose trees were well grown and now loaded with fruit, among which were many of those trees since called the Endicott pear. In the spring and summer, when both doors stood open and the trees were white with blossoms, a delicious breeze, filled with fragrance, passed through the house. A lantern was suspended from the centre of this hall, and a large clock, with a face of brass, ticked the silent moments, and chimed the hours through the long, long summer's day. The room upon the left, looking towards the street, was furnished "with looking-glasses, a rich Turkey carpet, window-curtains, and valances

Digitized by Google

of brocade, and enormous brass andirons in a fireplace that would hold a cord of wood." But what distinguished this room above many others in the colony were the hangings of rich cloth, by their raised figures, resembling tapestry, that covered the walls, and which the merchant had imported from Holland. Upon the right of the hall was a smaller room, called the merchant's office or study, which in winter, on account of its warmth, was often used as the family room. The chambers were furnished with every article of comfort known at that period, and the house was completely stocked with plate, with tankards and wine-cups, with pewter, copper, iron, and wooden utensils for the kitchen. It must be remembered that much of this luxury was not common in the colony, but was brought from the house of the merchant in London. In addition to this, for the period, elegant and luxurious dwelling, Mr. Aldersey owned a grazing farm, with large droves of cattle, at Muddy Brook, and a small island in the bay, that kept his enormous chimneys glowing with heat during the long winters.

Material well-being was not the first aim of our fathers. Mr. Aldersey was more conspicuous for his spiritual than for his worldly riches, — his outside demeanour of sanctification, his countenance, that frowned upon the ungodly, his apparently holy walk and conversation, the expression upon his brow, that ever said, even without audible words, to the weak in virtue, to those who owned human infirmities, even to the humble penitent, "There is between us an immeasurable gulf, — stand thou aside, I am holier than thou." But to the elders and the ministers, Mr. Aldersey's manner was humble and apologetic. He seemed ever to be saying, — "I cannot help it that I am so much better than you. I would, if it were possi-

Digitized by Google

ble, adopt some few infirmities so as to keep my honored friends in countenance."

The step-father of Naomi, of whose character we have endeavoured to give the reader some notion, was small in person, not tall, and extremely thin, but muscular and strong. His cold blue eye shone beneath a full and bushy brow. His hair, which was thin and grayish, had, since the return of the king, been replaced by a wig of orthodox proportions. Mr. Aldersey bore in his physiognomy undoubted marks of a keen intellect. His riches, his bearing, his standing in the church, altogether challenged universal deference. One might say he governed those who lived with him by his faults ; it would not be just to say so ; it was rather by a cold regard to expediency, that ever checked the flow of feeling, and made others ashamed of enthusiasm, while his formidable array of virtues made them feel themselves less than nothing in his presence.

Such was the house and such the guardian to whom Naomi, who might yet be called a child, as she was under twenty, bringing with her only a female attendant, was committed in this her new and strange home.

Completely overwhelmed as she was by the stunning news of the loss of her mother, that met her upon her arrival, exhausted nature at length sank overpowered into the arms of that precious friend of sorrow, that blessed attendant of darkness and stillness, — sleep. While she sleeps, we will endeavour to make the reader acquainted with her previous history.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV.

"A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a spirit still and bright,
With something of an angel's light."

BEAUTY is spiritual; the most perfect features are unmeaning until irradiated by the light of the soul, — like those vases which are opaque and indistinct till the light shines from within, when they reveal forms of exquisite beauty. Naomi, when sleeping, possessed that species of beauty that had long informed her features. They were now calm and motionless, like the marble statue that will never awake to life. A noble breadth of forehead, smooth and pale, like the leaf of the camellia, was surrounded by soft brown hair, that had never been festooned or curled, but lay in wavy folds upon the pure marble. Her eyes, now veiled by their lids, were of a deep gray, or blue, or even hazel, according as the light was reflected from them; they were not brilliant and sparkling, but serious, thoughtful, sometimes sad, and when fixed earnestly upon one, a mild light seemed burning within them. Her complexion was pale, but not unhealthy; and the soft but serious mouth disclosed perfect teeth. No one on first looking at Naomi would have

Digitized by Google

thought of her beauty. The regularity of her features was lost in something more precious ; —

> " A sweet, attractive kind of grace,
> A full assurance given by looks ;
> Continual comfort in her face,
> The lineaments of Gospel books."

Yes, it was the full assurance of perfect truth beneath those transparent features that made the charm of her presence. It is a common expression " as true as the Gospel " ; in that sense the word is used above, and we may add that in Naomi it was a true gospel of love that comforted all who looked upon her.

There had been few incidents in the life of Naomi. Her character had not been formed by external circumstances. Hers was one of those pure poetical souls, that had as yet found no manifestation. They seem made for an age of perfection that does not yet exist. Painting has succeeded in representing characters of this kind, in the early Madonnas of the Catholic Church ; pure types of nature in humble life, exalted, because they have been *chosen*. Poetry has spoilt, by endeavouring to idealize them, forgetting that their essence consists in being simply what they are, — divine.*

The fact of Naomi's early orphanhood, the solitude of the heart in which she had been left at the most important period of her growth, was perhaps the cause that spiritual consciousness instead of external interests pervaded her whole character. She had never known her father, but to her mother's love and influence her young heart had been completely open. The early separation from her mother had been the misfortune of her life, for although left with the kindest relatives, the tendrils of the

* This thought is derived from a foreign writer.

Digitized by Google

young heart, thus torn away from their early support, could not entwine themselves again, but floated loose upon the air. Solitude and want of companionship, of the interchange of thought upon the most interesting subjects, had formed in the little Naomi habits of reserve and of secret musings in her solitary hours, when her pillow would be wetted with the tears wrung from the lonely heart that longed to love. Not that she had not objects of love. She lived with indulgent friends, and in the truest domestic harmony; but hers was a heart that could only surrender to tenderness, and to the most intimate sympathy. To her absent mother she poured out in her letters the riches of an affluent, of an exquisitely beautiful nature, already overflowing with love and enthusiasm. But the too fearful mother, imagining in those divine gifts an exaggerated sensibility, and fearing the evils and sorrows involved in unrestrained, unguarded affections, did not respond to the ardent, heart-warm expressions of her daughter. Her letters in return inculcated the cold and guarded precepts of a more mature, even a more worldly experience, throwing over the exuberant blossoms of this young spring of feeling the wet blanket of an April snow, blighting for one season the expanding flower, but strengthening and enriching the plant whose deep roots centred in the rich soil of the heart.

The solitude in which Naomi lived might have made her a superstitious devotee, or a dreaming enthusiast; but fortunately nature had endowed her with a vigorous reason, a strong good-sense, that prevented her from becoming either the one or the other. But her young heart thirsted for excellence; she yearned for an unknown, but a possible, goodness, which she found not around her,—neither in nature nor in the world, neither in the church nor in society, neither in sermons nor in books. The

Digitized by Google

conception of this ideal goodness was ever before her; but she found it not in herself, and wept that she was never nearer to it than to the rainbow in the horizon. Dwelling as Naomi did upon the things of her own consciousness, she was in danger of sinking into melancholy, had she not been arrested by a circumstance which we shall soon mention.

The belief, that each individual soul receives light immediately from God himself, has been the spontaneous faith of many of the purest minds throughout the world. Light seems to descend into such minds in periods of darkness, and in the midst of turbulence and oppression. Women, as well as the other sex, pass through deep and earnest struggles after truth. They also wrestle with the angel, and are sometimes victorious. Their natural timidity, forbidding them to publish their thoughts to the world, prevents their struggles and their conquests from being known; but in deep retirement, many live and die in a pure and holy faith, feeling that God is ever near their souls, giving them bread to eat that the world knoweth not of.

Twenty years before this time Mrs. Hutchinson had broken through the restraints of sex, and exhibited in this country her masculine and independent spirit. Her inquiring mind and disinterested benevolence created for her a strong party, and moved in her favor the most candid minds in the colony; and had she not asserted a claim to prophetic inspiration, the Puritan saint, Cotton, himself would have been her disciple. As we now read her history, we cannot but acknowledge that she was before the age in intellectual insight; but we feel also the taint of all imperfect natures, and are obliged to admit that her martyrdom (for it was no less) was as much the fruit of her inordinate self-esteem as of her intellectual

Digitized by Google

superiority over others. Her blameless life, perhaps, left her conscience free from reproach; but when, from the savage solitude of her exile, she looked back upon her career, she must have feared that the slimy trail of spiritual pride had sullied the white robes of her martyrdom.

Naomi was too truly a woman, and from instinctive delicacy knew too well the position she held, ever to have made the struggles of her soul the theme of public discussion; but she sank into a deep melancholy, for which the mistaken kindness of her friends, ignorant of the cause of the grief that was consuming her young life, prescribed change of scene, the gayeties of her age, and the amusements that her rank in life permitted her to enjoy. They had Royalist friends in London, and as it was just the time of Charles the Second's return, they took her to London, to be a spectator at least, if not a participator, of the rejoicings and festivities of the occasion. She saw the celebrated characters of the age, if not very near, yet near enough to observe their witty but profligate manners, and that they turned into pitiless ridicule every noble feeling, and every genuine emotion of the human heart. Her delicate beauty attracted much attention; amusements and parties of pleasure were pressed upon her; even more than one alliance was proposed for her, by the not too affluent friends of the king, prompted, perhaps, as much by her reputed wealth as by the attraction of her refined and delicate beauty.

Strange as it may seem, although in this noisy and riotous London Naomi found no solace from her melancholy, she found peace for her soul.

The nurse who had attended Naomi in her infancy had been placed by her mother as the personal attendant of her daughter, and had never been separated from her. Naomi loved her, as children do love those whose faces have

Digitized by Google

never worn for them any but the kindest expression of love and protection. The nurse went with her to London; while there, through her family connections, for she was born in the city, she became acquainted with the followers of George Fox, and was soon a zealous disciple, deeply infected with the principles of the Quakers. The confidence subsisting between Naomi and her nurse permitted the most familiar and intimate communication, and the words of power that George Fox himself uttered were repeated to her in the privacy and retirement of her own bedroom. The simplicity of his doctrine presented only what the humblest mind could comprehend, and yet its sublimity could fill the most expanded soul. "The inward light, the voice of God in the soul." Naomi listened to these simple words, and they poured a flood of light into her mind. She had been sitting in darkness, when as by a touch, as in a theatre, the whole of her being was flooded with light. She had been too long wandering alone in darkness. "She had ascended in thought to heaven, she had penetrated the depths of hell, she had gone to the uttermost parts of the earth, seeking with prayers and tears after the truth, but these simple words, vibrating at the right moment upon her ears, had been to her the firmest conviction that it was within her own soul. Peace entered with God into his purest sanctuary, a humble and sincere heart."

As soon as the doctrines of the Quakers were explained more fully, Naomi found they were what had long been forming in her own mind. She needed only the word, and the enigma was solved; she had found the key-note, and her whole soul was harmony; the spark had been applied, and her whole mind was light.

After the account Margaret had given her, Naomi consented, nay, she was eager, to accompany her to one of

Digitized by Google

the meetings of the Quakers. It was the afternoon of a November day, and the place of meeting in the neighbourhood of Charing Cross. Long before they reached the place, Naomi and her attendant, both wrapped in close hoods and cloaks, became involved in the dense crowd of persons all pressing the same way, and for the same purpose. George Fox, at this time, while in London, drew immense crowds to hear him. The afternoon was extremely dark, and this, added to the habitual fog of the city, made it impossible to distinguish one countenance from another. Naomi, alarmed, pressed closer and closer to Margaret, but what at first excited her fears was in fact her protection. No one saw her fair, pale face, and the contrast her appearance would have presented to many in the throng. The two young women were carried along by the pressure from behind, and taken several times off their feet, till they were landed in a large upper chamber, lighted, and furnished with plain deal seats. A kind of reading-desk was placed on one side, upon which was laid a large Bible.

The room was instantly filled to overflowing; every inch of standing room upon the floor was occupied, and the window-sills filled with those who had the temerity to venture upon so insecure a foothold. When Naomi looked around, she saw that the audience was composed of the middling class of persons; many with close-cut hair and steeple hats, and a sprinkling here and there of velvet cloaks and curled wigs; although at this very time the Protector's family, and even his daughters, attended in disguise upon the preaching of George Fox. They waited a quarter of an hour, and then, when he entered, every sound was hushed, and every eye turned toward him. Naomi saw a tall, large, and very remarkable person enter. His face was comely, with close-cut brown

Digitized by Google

hair, covered, however, with a broad-rimmed hat, which he did not remove from his head. The striking peculiarity of his appearance was occasioned by a complete suit of untanned leather, not well fitting, nor made by a very skilful tailor. His whole expression and bearing was gentle, heart-soothing, inspiring confidence, and composing the feelings to respect and love.

He sat nearly half an hour in silence, and the silence of the whole assembly was so intense, that Naomi felt oppressed by it. But George Fox himself, as he sat there collecting his soul in inward quietness, was the absorbing object of interest. It is remarkable how his personal character has been impressed upon the whole sect of his followers, and is not yet, perhaps, effaced from them as a peculiar people.

The silence was at length broken by the slow, calm accents of Fox in prayer. Prayer was one, perhaps the most remarkable, of his gifts, — the weight, as it were, of his inward spirit. The fewness, but the complete fulness, of his words of power reached every heart in that assembly, filling them either with admiration, or with contrition; with consolation, or with hope and love. He was like one who had been dwelling near to the source of perfection, wisdom, and love, and brought, as it were, the spirit and the language of that higher world to spread abroad in this. It was, when he finished, as though to every one of that assembly he had brought a gift; as though he had laid a rose in every hand, or a wreath upon every brow. Naomi felt as though she had received a jewel of inestimable price,— that precious white stone of the Scriptures, "on which a name is written that no man knoweth save he that receiveth it."

If such was the effect of the prayer, how much more completely was this precious doctrine confirmed to her by

Digitized by Google

the exhortation that followed the prayer, in which the precious doctrine of the *inward light*, the perceptible guidance of the Holy Spirit, the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, was made logically clear and rationally true to her perceptions, and its influence to comfort and sustain for ever established over her mind.

No one else spake that evening.

The impression that George Fox made upon Naomi's mind remained unmixed and unimpaired by any other. It was like a pure cast from a beautiful work of art, of which the mould had been broken. She did not attend another Quaker meeting.

Naomi's mind having been prepared, guarded, and balanced by a love of the truth she had so long been seeking, she could not enter into the extravagances of the sect. She was able to separate the pure inward light from the empty and noisy outwardly dazzling coruscations. It is true, she wished others should receive the light that had brought peace to her own soul; but, as it was within each soul, she thought it should be the still, small voice that would penetrate the mind, rather than the excitement of the senses, or the tumult of numbers. She never afterwards attended a Quaker meeting. She had no sympathy with the Ranters. She condemned all those vain peculiarities by which the Quakers made themselves obnoxious to the civil government. The folly of remaining covered in the presence of princes, or in the church, the absurd cut of their garments, the quaint and often ludicrous application of yea and nay, thee and thou, seemed to her transparent perception of truth, like the mint and anise of the Law, while the all-essential was neglected.

Naomi returned to her friends in the country, outwardly changed only in the serenity that had taken the place of

Digitized by Google

the drooping and melancholy expression of her countenance. Within she had found the fountain of the water of life, and her countenance had the transparent purity of the statue that is placed to guard its serene depths.

Immediately after her return, she was summoned to see once more the mother, who, although so widely separated, had ever been nearest to her heart. Her guardian's consent was reluctantly granted, and she anticipated the joy of making her mother a learner and a convert of the new truth that had sprung up in her soul. But there was a drawback to her happiness; she must leave Margaret, her faithful nurse, behind. Her step-father had written peremptorily, that no Quaker or fanatic should be permitted to accompany his step-daughter, or to set foot under his roof. Indeed, it would have been the greatest imprudence, for it was at the time when the persecution of the Quakers was at its hottest point. Another attendant, whose orthodoxy could not be suspected, was procured for Naomi; and another of those separations took place, that of the foster-mother from her nursling, — those rendings asunder, whose pain no balsam has ever yet been found to heal.

The protracted and tempestuous voyage, whose termination was to reveal to Naomi that she was doubly an orphan, had served to strengthen and deepen her convictions of the truth of her new faith. When the little bark was lifted upon waves that seemed like moving mountains uprooted and cast into the tumultuous depth, and when the mystery of darkness brooded over the wide and sullen waters, — when the sun rose like a rayless ball of light out of unfathomed darkness, and when the moon spread over the hushed billows a mantle of silver, — she felt that the soul was alone with God; that he was near to her, and that it needed no intervention of church or priest, or

Digitized by Google

even the Bible, to make her feel that he held her, and all things, in the hollow of his hand. At such moments, but they were few and far between, the habitual loneliness of her soul was gone; but at others she felt overwhelmed with the thought of the desolateness she should feel in the New World. It seemed to be a presentiment, a foreshadowing, of the loss that awaited her when she should set her foot upon the unknown shore, and feel that no heart beat there in unison with her own.

This presentiment was not false; when Naomi placed her foot upon the wharf, she was informed of the death of her mother. It was no time to give way to the natural grief of the child's heart; the self-control she had acquired from her new principles came to her aid, and she entered without apparent agitation her step-father's carriage, which was waiting for her.

It was the time to test the efficacy of her new principles, and though Naomi could not prevent the silent tears from streaming down her cheeks, there was a calm and humble submission in her heart. It had been her fond and earnest wish to communicate to her mother, and to make her taste of the hidden sources of her peace and joy; but now that she, the only person from whom she could hope for sympathy, was gone, she determined the secret of her new faith should remain locked within her own breast, unless she should he called upon by the voice of duty to disclose what would place her in the front and most obnoxious ranks of heresy. She felt no call for martyrdom, nor even for persecution. In her secret and silent worship of the heart, she could offend neither church nor state; and she trusted, however keen and observant were the orthodox principles of her step-father, that in her humble silence she might escape his scrutiny.

When she alighted from the carriage, and entered her

Digitized by Google

step-father's hall, she found him waiting to receive her. He held out his hand coldly and stiffly, but with an expression of extreme suavity upon his face. Naomi would have taken his hand between both hers, and pressed her lips upon it. He was her mother's husband, and she felt almost a childlike wish to throw herself upon his breast, and claim a child's place in his heart. But the moment she felt his eyes upon her, the moment she looked upon the cold, pale blue of that eye, she shrank, and a shiver ran through her frame. Mr. Aldersey seemed to perceive this, and bowed formally; he immediately brought forward the little Ruth. "It was the last wish of your mother," he said, "that you would take your little sister under your care, and make up to her her and our great loss."

Naomi looked up into his face, and the tears rushed to her eyes, while a vivid blush took the place of the pallor that had overspread her features. "I was about to ask," she said, "your permission to return immediately to my guardian; but," — she paused, — "if any wish of my mother's, — or of yours, — if any duty laid on me by her should prevent," — and she paused again.

It was no part of Mr. Aldersey's plan to have Naomi return to England. It had long been one of his warmest wishes to have his step-daughter in New England at the time she attained her majority. He wished to get the management of her modest fortune into his own hands. "He could double it for her," he said, and perhaps he deceived himself with this flattering unction laid upon his soul, although it was immediately followed with the secret hope that she would die unmarried, when her sister Ruth or himself would be the natural heir of her wealth. His plan was formed. Naomi was to be treated with the utmost consideration and external respect; placed at the

Digitized by Google

head of his table, his guests must be hers, his friends her friends; their interests must be outwardly the same. Acting upon this plan, he immediately said, — "Ah, no! she must lay aside the wish of returning; was there not the last earnest request of her mother, and, though perhaps not to be mentioned as having the same weight of influence upon her actions, was there not his own desire to place her in the only proper situation for her, at the head of his own family? and," he added, somewhat stiffly, "her wishes should govern his household, his servants, and, in all things reasonable, himself."

The contrast presented to an observer by these words would have been somewhat ludicrous. On one side, Naomi, meek and humble, upon whose whole features and person were impressed the most feminine gentleness and in the presence of her step-father a timidity not exactly natural, but which arose from their relation to each other. He who was to be the slave of her wishes stood, on the other hand, the very impersonation of inflexible obstinacy and self-willed determination. Naomi herself felt the truth, and shrunk again, with a feeling of shivering, from assuming any duties in a household where the head seemed to her a sort of living and walking tribunal, a secret inquisition, not only restraining and driving back from the lips all gushing confidence and all swelling enthusiasm, but even exercising a power upon the secret, almost unformed sentiments of the heart. Did the thought enter her mind of endeavouring to explore the stony path that led to his confidence? Her mother had loved him; but Naomi had had reason to think that her poor mother's hold upon that cold and slimy heart had only been held because of the bleeding of the feet upon the rough and thorny way.

She was inexpressibly relieved, then, when the door

Digitized by Google

opened and the servants entered, preceded by one who seemed to be among, but much superior to, them. Naomi's first glance at the plain and homely features of this woman produced a revolution, a sort of free-breathing in her whole being. They met hers with such a warm, and cordial, and truthful glance, that there instantly arose within her a confiding and homelike feeling; the home, she thought, could not be altogether intolerable, where a face that expressed such genuine truth of character was familiar. This person, who approached and held out her hand with so simple and confiding an expression, was Faith, the housekeeper and domestic guardian of the family. There was, at the first glance, neither beauty nor even comeliness in that face, but the noble and true soul spake through those plain features. Faith had one of those faces, those true household faces, that, after once knowing, we can never bear to miss. They are like the cheerful fireside, the comfortable arm-chair, the easy slippers; they cannot be dispensed with. But in Faith, the comforting and beautiful qualities of the soul had so usurped and banished (to those who knew her) all plainness of feature, that the very features had the soothing influence of beauty. Her friends were like those of the child, that forms its standard of beauty from the features of its first kind nurse, be they dark or fair, Grecian or African.

Naomi soon followed Faith to the chamber that had been prepared for her. It was the best in the house, and furnished with what, at that time, was extreme luxury. A large and elaborately carved bedstead was hung with heavy curtains and valances of brocade. The most curious thing in the room was the covering of this bed, a specimen of the industry of some Flemish nuns, which in the course of commercial transactions had come into

Digitized by Google

the possession of Mr. Aldersey. It was formed of pieces of different kinds of stuff, not one of which was larger than a die. These were arranged with exquisite neatness into a mosaic of a variety of patterns. Flowers, birds, and animals were placed in natural positions, and with nearly their natural colors, — all the work of the needle, not in simple embroidery, which would have been comparatively easy, but in the endless arrangement of little scraps of every shade and color.

The three windows of the room, one looking into the street, the others into the orchard and garden, were furnished with curtains of the same material as those of the bed. The chairs were of heavy, carved wood, and the toilet an elaborate piece of furniture of the time of Elizabeth. With all this luxury, however, there was an absence of little domestic comforts; the leather-bottomed chairs stood stiffly against the wall, and every thing seemed as though it were not for use and comfort, but for ostentation and show.

The moment that Naomi found herself alone with Faith, she uttered but one word, — "My mother!" — and burst into an agony of tears. The tension of nerve, the self-restraint, the sort of iron pressure upon brain and heart, that she had felt in the presence of Mr. Aldersey, gave way, and her full heart found relief in this uncontrollable flood of tears, that seemed to break down and overbear all boundaries and all efforts at restraint.

It would have been natural for the two young women to have thrown themselves into each other's arms, — for Naomi to have wept upon the breast of Faith; but that would have been contrary to the retinency of Puritan manners, that allowed no effusion or abandonment to feeling. Faith, however, was deeply touched with sympathy for the poor orphan. She took her in her arms, and laid

Digitized by Google

her upon the spacious bed, already prepared with fine and snowy sheets, loosened her garments, and, with a tenderness like that of a mother, paid her a thousand little attentions intended to soothe, while she attempted not, by words of comfort or advice, to check the flood of tears relieving the burdened heart of Naomi. At length Naomi looked up, and, with an attempt to smile, said, "You mean that I shall not miss my ——," but the word mother checked her again and she burst afresh into tears.

"Do not try to speak," said Faith, gently; "weep, yes, weep for her; she deserved these tears. Ah! we can have but *one* mother, and yours was one of a thousand." Gradually she led Naomi to ask of her mother, of her manner of life, of her habits, her occupations, her fervent piety, her religious hopes, her sickness and death, till Naomi was soothed and comforted, and her tears ceased to flow. Faith, whose loyalty and faithfulness to others were as immovable as the rocky foundations of the globe, said not a word that could impair Naomi's respect for her step-father; but she could not but feel that her mother's life had been one of sacrifices, a victim to the petty faults of him who should have been her support. Like a tender plant upheld by the circle of an iron ring, that chafed and corroded its too delicate texture while it afforded the support that was needed.

After some hours of conversation, Naomi fell asleep, and Faith left her to the repose she so much needed.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V.

"They passed the sea, to keep
Their Sabbaths in the eye of God alone,
In his wide temple of the wilderness."

When Naomi awoke, she recollected it was the Sabbath. The sun of her first Sabbath in the New World rose as calm and as beautiful as it could have risen in Eden. No sound from the street, not even a solitary footfall, disturbed the deep repose of the morning. She rose early, and, drawing aside the thick brocade curtain that hung across the diamond-paned window, looked out upon her new abode. If the moonlight had been sacred and touching, upon the broad waters and beautiful hills, the sun lighted them with a transparent radiance such as she had rarely seen in her own climate. The azure of the sky was cloudless, free from mist or fog, the water was of a more deep and shaded blue, and the woods were beginning to show the varied and softened tints of autumn. As the sun rose higher, a slight mist gathered from the valleys, and spread like a half-transparent veil over the landscape. Many hundreds of human beings were hushed beneath, not, as in the Old World, resting, overwearied with excessive toil, or preparing for the joyous fête of Sunday, but in prayer, that began at the dawn, feeding their affections with the spiritual manna which they be-

Digitized by Google

lieved dispensed to their souls in this desert, as the true manna was of old to feed the Israelites in their weary pilgrimage.

As Naomi looked abroad upon this splendid but almost solitary landscape, her imagination peopled it with scenes and characters accordant with itself. A prospect that we look upon for the first time, and which we expect will long lie before our eyes, leaves almost an impression of pain on the mind. It seems an unwritten tablet; and with what joys or sorrows shall we hereafter fill it up? These placid rivers, these wooded hills, this boundless sea, were all silent to her. She could associate no sorrows nor difficulties with them now, in their radiant beauty, such as she had heard the early pilgrims had suffered here; but her far-reaching and benevolent mind longed to fill them with happy people, where conscience should be as free as these flowing rivers, love like this bending azure. Her young heart longed to find sympathy and companionship in such a state.

Naomi found that a complete silence was observed in this patriarchal house. She crept down stairs as far as the kitchen. No preparation for breakfast or dinner was allowed by our fathers to disturb the sacredness of the Sabbath. The servants sat with their open Bibles before them, while large logs mouldered in the capacious chimney. Sambo, an old negro, the only one without a book, for he could not read, had crept under the overhanging chimney, enjoying the warmth grateful at the first chill of autumn. They rose respectfully, both men and women, and Sambo said, as an apology to a stranger for their idleness, — "Sabber day, Missee, no busy; no work Sabber day; all read, all pray, all preach, Sabber day."

"And do we fast as well as pray, Sambo, on the Sabbath day?"

Digitized by Google

"Breakfast and dinner all baked," he said, and pointed to the oven, where the dinner and breakfast had been prepared before the setting of the sun on the preceding afternoon.

I cannot attempt to describe the breakfast of our forefathers; that they were no ascetics the lading of their vessels proves. Coffee and tea were not yet common in Europe, much less in the New World; and, among all but laboring people, the beef and ale-breakfasts of an earlier period had passed away.

Naomi lingered a few moments to converse with Sambo, who was to her a completely new specimen of the domestic servant. The African features certainly confuse, if they do not overturn, our previous theories of beauty. Sambo was a short and very small negro, whose head was wholly disproportioned to the diminutive body. His hands and feet belonged to the head rather than to the frail arms; and the small legs were set exactly in the middle of the foot, thus resembling those instruments called scrapers, intended to remove the mud from gutters. His complexion was intensely black, resembling polished ebony; and the closely-curled, wiry, woolly hair was beginning around the temples and forehead to turn snow-white, so that it appeared crowned with a wreath of white paper, or of orange blossoms, placed just above the ears. His thick lips disclosed the ivory of his teeth, and, in proportion to the protuberance of the lips was the robbery they had committed upon the nose, filching from it its just and beautiful proportions.

I have said above that the African features confuse and confound all our previous days of beauty. Sambo was the very soul of loyalty, chivalry, fidelity, affection. His love was boundless; his devotion to those he loved went to the utmost limits of his strength and ingenuity;

Digitized by Google

and yet how could those poor, deformed features express these noble sentiments? Even the full, expressive eye of the dog, melting as it often is, is denied to the African, as we see him in his degraded form. Ah! the time will come when he will wear the form of a seraph, and put on his robes of beauty.

Sambo was a captive, he could hardly be called a slave; for that word seems to imply a feeling of degradation, and Sambo had no such feeling. Indeed, the Africans belonging to the families of our ancestors in Massachusetts held a peculiar, almost an anomalous, situation there. No slavery was ever so light as that in many old families in Massachusetts, and no slaves ever so indulged. Their place resembled very much that which was held by the fool or jester in the households of princes in the ancient feudal times; they were allowed peculiar license, and treated with great familiarity, — with the indulgence of children, but, alas for them! without the permanent ties that hold parents to their children; often with the favor of favorites, — perhaps often, also, with the capriciousness that attends favoritism.

Sambo was the only member of Mr. Aldersey's family that was admitted by him to terms of perfect equality, because he knew that all his imposing qualities were lost upon poor Sambo. He could neither read nor write, scarcely could he say his prayers, and any excess of sanctimoniousness, any addition of spiritual pride, seemed to Sambo only low spirits or melancholy in his master, and he instantly strove with childlike gayety, or as with the gambols of a faithful animal, to dissipate the work of supererogation.

If Sambo had been asked if he belonged to Mr. Aldersey, he would have been puzzled to answer. Mr. Aldersey, according to his views, belonged much more to

Digitized by Google

him than he to Mr. Aldersey ; and the feeling of proprietorship extended to every thing else, — to the house and the furniture, to the horses and domestic animals ; even the human inmates were his. The innocent vanity, the naïve pride, with which he gloried in every addition to the family, was amusingly augmented by the arrival of Naomi. Her beauty and her reputed wealth added vast importance to poor Sambo, for he instantly adopted and took Naomi under his patronage, and this morning's conversation placed the seal upon the previously contemplated *protection* on the part of Sambo.

Soon after breakfast was ended, the quiet of the little town was broken by the sound of many footsteps. The hour for hastening to the sanctuary had arrived, — that hour of the great solace, of the dear and sacred employment ; indeed, it might be called the only hour of recreation for our forefathers, — that for which they endured every hardship and made every sacrifice. This was the weekly period when their souls were to be deeply moved ; excited to fervor of devotion, or racked with deep metaphysical speculations ; elevated to spiritual exultation as they looked upon themselves as the special favorites of Heaven, or moved to intolerant aversion towards those who differed from them. " God was their God ; they were the favorites of the Most High, and those that differed from them had no business there." " The world was wide enough," they said ; " let them go elsewhere, and worship in their own way."

Those who are disposed to blame too severely the exclusive and persecuting spirit of our forefathers should recollect with what labors and sacrifices of wealth and life — the life of the noblest and the fairest ; the sacrifice of country and many precious ties — they had won this privilege of worshipping God in their own way ; of en-

Digitized by Google

joying their Sabbaths and their seasons of spiritual refreshment, free from molestation and interruption. They had purchased twice over their rockbound vineyard, where with infinite trouble and toil they had planted their little vine, — the church. It had been made to take root, and to live by the heavy sweat of their honest brows ; its roots had been nourished by their freely flowing blood ; it had been watered by their heart-wrung tears ; the precious dews of heaven had rested upon it ; and, now that they could sit under its shadow to enjoy sweet refeshment, should they leave gaps in the hedges for every marauding enemy to enter ? Should Ranters and Seekers, Brownists and Quakers, have free entrance, to trample down and pluck the precious fruits of their own vine ? Should they allow Antinomians and heretics, free-thinkers and Universalists, to graft strange shoots upon their precious stock ? No, they had a perfect right to drive them off, and to shut and bar their gates against them ; and if such returned with the same evil purposes, they must be branded as thieves and vagrants, and, if they could be restrained in no other way, imprisoned and punished with the utmost severity. Thus reasoned and thus acted the wisest of our forefathers.

When Mr. Aldersey's family joined the thronging company in the streets, Naomi was struck with the serious and stern aspect of the gathering multitudes. Grave men, sweet, composed countenances of women, repressed gayety in the children, all showed that the most earnest concern of life was awaiting their presence in their temple of worship. This was a large, square, rough building, with a small belfry on the roof, standing at a point, or rather forming the centre, from which the principal streets diverged. Time had not, as with the churches to which Naomi had been accustomed, woven a mantle of ivy and

Digitized by Google

moss to conceal the imperfections of the architecture, nor had the changing seasons left a legacy of time-wrought embroidery upon the naked shingles. They had indeed attained a softened coloring from age, the changes of seasons for thirty years having left a rich tint of brown upon the unplaned boards.

The interior corresponded with the outside. There was no ornament upon the walls, nor painted hue upon the diamond-paned windows. The boarded walls and naked beams were the work of poverty, and not of art; but as the boards were of oak, a richer tint was imparted to the aspect within. The pulpit alone was adorned with a crimson curtain, and the seat of the governor distinguished by a rude canopy; the hour-glass, inclosed in a sort of wooden frame, was a conspicuous ornament of the pulpit.

The congregation were not seated in families, but according to their rank and civil distinction, upon long seats divided in the centre by an aisle, that separated the males and the females. The elders and deacons, with snowy heads and stern faces, sat beneath the pulpit, facing the congregation; they were the police-officers of the church, and took note of every irregularity. Little girls were permitted to sit with their mothers, but the young people generally were arranged in the front of the gallery; boys were tucked upon the stairs, with constables to check every rising emotion, every outbreak of weariness or glee.

The distinctions of rank, the precedence taken by the aristocracy of the country, the vast difference in the dress of those who were the gentlemen and the working people of the community, were infinitely greater than at the present day. Silk and velvet was the common wear of gentlemen of the period, and when we consider the picturesque fashion of the time of the Charleses, modified in-

Digitized by Google

deed by the Puritans, but never approaching even in them to the plainness of the present day, we can imagine what contrasts were presented in the aspect of the assembly, — the magistrates and the rich merchants in the upper seats, with their velvet cloaks, their lace ruffs or rich falling collars, and their servants, and the laboring men, in leathern doublets and woollen caps, ranged around the walls. The building was crowded to every inch of its capacity, — the aisles, the pulpit-stairs, the galleries. Here was no altar, no picture, no mural monument, no gilded inscription, no chandelier, no velvet draperies ; but a sea of serious and up-turned faces. These bare walls, these rude board seats, had been consecrated by the prayers and tears, the trials and struggles, the sacred and touching memories, of the Puritan pilgrims. Here they entered into the church covenant, that alone gave them the privileges of freemen, and here only were the children of these freemen baptized into liberty. The civil well-being, as well as the deepest feelings of the human heart, clustered around these bare rafters and naked walls. Devotion was the great solace of the lives of our forefathers, and the nice distinctions of metaphysical theology were the employment of their leisure hours.

Under this poor raftered roof had the greatly gifted, the learned and liberal, the winning and courteous Cotton announced to laymen the opinions that influenced the policy of the government, and here had he been followed to the grave by the funeral wail of the country, from Plymouth to New Haven. Winthrop, the upright magistrate, had here received those modest honors within their gift. These had been the shining lights, the guiding stars, of the colony, that had lately gone down in the west and left a gloom in the whole colony, especially over the little community of Boston.

Digitized by Google

Naomi's entrance to the seat appointed for her had been a little delayed by the governor immediately preceding her, accompanied by his halberdiers, who went before him with their staves, and placed them one on each side of his seat; this was a voluntary service, and rendered with a free heart, unless some unpopular act of the governor made them withhold the honor. Mr. Aldersey drew the eyes of the congregation upon Naomi, by walking up to the plate by the pulpit-stairs, and placing an additional offering there, because his step-daughter had been added to his family. As he returned to his seat, the Rev. Mr. Wilson rose to pray, and every sound was hushed, and every wandering eye-glance recalled and cast down. Then followed the psalm, from the old version of Sternhold and Hopkins, read and sung in single lines. This break in the harmony was painful to a musical ear, but the windows of the house were open, and the waving branches of trees that were near the meeting-house supplied a continual melody to Naomi's ear, that softened the discords of inharmonious voices.

The Rev. John Norton rose to preach. His deep-set and piercing eye seemed to search the soul of every listener, and his voice, deep and penetrating, arrested and riveted attention. His people had lately observed a change in his countenance; a fixed melancholy had settled upon his features; perhaps he already felt the shadow of the hand that only a few years afterwards beckoned him silently and suddenly away. His sermon was a violent denunciation of the iniquity of the times, "like the iniquity of Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness." He lamented the coldness and corruption of the age, the idleness and frivolity of the young men, and the selfishness and degeneracy of their fathers; the vanity and arts of seduction of the women; the long hair

Digitized by Google

of the men, the hoods and veils of the women. Accustomed as Naomi was to regard outward simplicity as the expression of inward purity and integrity, this insisting upon external conformity to a mere sumptuary law seemed like the polishing of the rind and husk of the fruit, when the kernel was absent or worthless.

In the midst of the most interesting part of his sermon, — for the elder, the guardian of the hour-glass, had just turned its running sand for the second time, — an appalling interruption to one unprepared, as was Naomi, took place. The door was suddenly thrown open, and two persons, clothed from head to foot in sackcloth, their long hair streaming over their faces and completely filled with ashes, and their faces deathly pale, strode up the middle aisle and placed themselves in front of the preacher. At first they were silent.

Mr. Norton paused in his sermon, and said, in a stern voice, "What do you here? Children of the Devil, daughters of blasphemies, and inheritors of lies! what do you here? Depart from this sanctuary! Turn from your iniquities and your sins! Repent of your heresies and your evil-doings; for the great day of wrath is coming upon you." They stood perfectly unmoved, and the Rev. Mr. Norton raised his voice still louder. "Depart," he said, "children of the Devil, from this sanctuary of the Lord, which you pollute with your blasphemies!"

One of the women then turned to the people, and cried out in a loud and piercing voice, — "Listen not, deluded people, to that wicked priest, John Norton; that whited sepulchre, out of whose mouth death feeds death, and whose dry skeleton-bones contain no heart."

Naomi gazed at this horrible spectacle with amazement and fear; were these, then, she thought, Quakers, own-

Digitized by Google

ing the same simple and beautiful faith that was her own ? And she felt her knees trembling beneath her, and the color forsake her lips and cheeks.

Governer Endicott was prompt in his measures ; he gave a sign to the constables, who were at this period the most respectable men in the community, and the two women were instantly conveyed away to prison. These and such like interruptions from Quakers were so frequent at this period, that this one produced only a momentary excitement in the congregation. Not so with Naomi ; she felt that, occurring upon her first Sunday in her new home, it was ominous to her of what was to follow. She thought of her mother, and looked round, as it were for protection ; a sense of faintness came over her, and she would have fallen, had not Faith, who sat not very far from her, grasped her hand and recalled her to self-possession before the observation of the audience was turned towards her.

Naomi had completely regained her serenity when the service was over, and the Rev. Mr. Wilson had pronounced the blessing, with outspread arms, over the waiting assembly. No one moved, such was the respectful reverence of the times, till the ministers and elders had descended the aisle. They came with dignified and courteous demeanour, dispensing smiles and kind inquiries to each of their flock. They paused at the seat of Naomi, and greeted her with paternal interest ; she was a lamb added to the flock of which they were the shepherds. There was a certain indefinable manner, a something, even in this short greeting, that disclosed the stern relation which existed between them ; the position which they, as their undoubted right, assumed towards her, and to which she, on her part, was to submit as to her unquestioning duty.

Digitized by Google

Even in this short interview she felt the sharp, but at this moment the light, pressure of that spiritual domination over conscience, that, like an iron chain placed around a vigorous tree, checks not its upward growth, but eats into its very heart, and mars its expanding and symmetrical beauty.

The congregation followed the steps of the teachers, and now again the narrow and winding streets of the little town were full of the worshipping people, all, with silent steps and deeply meditative faces, seeking their well-ordered homes. No joyous children gambolled their satisfaction at the conclusion of the tedious service; their joy was silent, but, we may well believe, sincerer than at the present day, when the restraint is so light and short; no worldly footsteps were bent towards the post-office or the news-rooms; no loving pairs sought the shaded retirement of the common, then, as now, attractive in verdant beauty. No, they went to their homes to read and pray; to meditate upon the sermon, and prepare to make it the discussion of the Monday morning, when the merchants met in the market-place, and of the Monday evening, when their wives met at that rare luxury, the tea-table, and mingled theology with the every-day affairs of life, as the only vital and ever-interesting subject.

At the close of the afternoon service a scene occurred, so characteristic of the time and of the community that it deserves a record. A case of church discipline had been announced the preceding Sunday, and the parties summoned to appear before the ministers and elders. This was a breach of a promise of marriage, brought against a young man, a member of the church, — one distinguished for his exemplary walk and conversation, his formal observance of the Sabbath, and preëminence in all pious exercises, and of course belonging to the fash-

Digitized by Google

ionable circle. The complaint was made by the family of the young lady. Although they were reputed wealthy, neither the mother of the young lady nor the lady herself was a member of the church. It was an unusual and rare occurrence for a member of the church to seek an alliance with one out of its pale; but the father of the young lady was reputed wealthy, and she was an only child. He had lately met with misfortunes, and subsequently the match was broken off. The father, exasperated at what he considered an injury and insult to his daughter, brought the circumstances before the church, to be tried, as it were, at the ecclesiastical court of the ministers and elders. Now it appeared in evidence that the engagement had been broken off, on the part of the gentleman, immediately after the misfortunes of the father of his bride, and without alleging any cause but the want of piety on the part of the young lady. She was not in a state of grace, he said. It was forbidden in Scripture for the believer to yoke with the unbeliever.

The young girl herself, overwhelmed with confusion and outraged modesty, had most reluctantly consented to this public exposure. She stood with pale cheek and trembling, blanched lips, betraying, perhaps, a deep and heartfelt interest in her faithless lover, that she would fain have concealed, while he, with spiritual pride, affected to lament his conscientious scruples. "Had she, alas! had any convictions of sin, had she been only touched with repentance, with the hope of conversion, with any signs of grace," he said, "her person would have been as precious in his eyes as her soul; for God knew he had prayed day and night for her conversion."

This was a most delicate and difficult subject for the ministers to legislate upon. Neither Moses nor Paul had given any precise directions to guide their decision in

Digitized by Google

such a case. It could, indeed, have been determined by every man of honor, and every woman of feeling, from the dictates of their own hearts. Cotton probably would have refused to legislate upon such a case, and Winthrop to record it in his annals; but, as we have said above, a rougher and sterner race of men had succeeded to the first chivalrous age. The ministers and elders were divided in opinion, and the shades of evening began to envelop the building, and the waving branches of the trees around the meeting-house began to cast uncertain and mysterious shadows within it, before they could arrive at any unanimity of opinion. At length it was decided to adjourn the debate till the next Thursday, after the Lecture, and the young man and young woman were commended as subjects of prayer to every member of the church.

Arrived again at home, Naomi found that the Sabbath and its instructions were not yet ended. Mr. Aldersey was exemplary in all the duties that the strictness of the times demanded from every head of a family.

Before the slight repast of the evening was prepared or partaken of, every member of the family was summoned to catechizing and the evening worship, which, at the going down of the sun, closed the sacred observance of the Sabbath. No one was excused from this family service; neither the clerks of the store and counting-house, nor the oldest servants in the kitchen. Sambo, who could not read, was exempted from learning the catechism by heart; but he always stood behind his master's chair, with the open Bible in his hand, trying to spell the words as Mr. Aldersey read them aloud. He kept up, in an undertone, a sort of running commentary upon the instructions that were given. This evening the chapter that Mr. Aldersey read contained the beautiful

Digitized by Google

incident of the poor widow who cast all her living into the treasury. Sambo inquired into the form and use of the treasury. Mr. Aldersey explained that it was a large chest to receive the tribute. Tribute was entirely unintelligible to Sambo; but he said he hoped it was not very cold weather when the poor widow threw in her two mittens. (He had taken the idea from his own spelling.) This mistake of poor Sambo diffused a general titter among the clerks and the maid-servants; though, as Mr. Aldersey had not heard a word of Sambo's blunder, but passed it all over as his general commentary, he went on to exhort upon the unsatisfactory nature of all riches, and that the Bible enjoined, not only poverty of spirit, but a certain degree of poverty in outward things.

As Mr. Aldersey left the room, after the devotions were finished, Sambo followed him, and said, with a peculiar twinkle in his eye, as he looked up cunningly, — "Now, Massa, you going count up, see how much richer you are to-day than last Sabber day."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI.

"Lo! a new race, — an iron-hearted band,
The banished wanderers from a distant land;
These sweet religion's sacred flag unfurled,
And bade it float to bless another world."

When we read at this distance of time the quaint and homely annalists of our early age, we are apt to think something low and vulgar must have attached itself to the appearance and manners of our forefathers. We are misled by the dry and skeleton narratives of the times, where the bare facts, in all their harsh outline, are recorded, neither clothed by corroborating circumstances, nor softened by the sympathies of unrecorded emotion. Winthrop's Journal, to any but an historian or an antiquary, is liked the stripped and chilled forest in a wintry day, with here and there only a verdant twig, to show that it was a noble grove full of energy and life; but Winthrop's letters to his wife are among the most graceful and touching compositions that have ever been written, showing that he was a noble, a courteous, a generous, and chivalrous gentleman. The manners and sentiments of the best of our forefathers bore the stamp of the best of English society in that age of luxury and far-advanced civilization. To their high religious and moral qualities,

Digitized by Google

they added learning and accomplishments. They came *from among* the nobility and the church, and although Puritans, those who first came to Boston had not thrown off their allegiance to the church, and were not at that time the rigid non-conformists that they afterwards became.

The ministers, also, were among the most accomplished of the sons of the church. They had been educated at the Universities, and were among the first scholars of Cambridge and Oxford. Some of them had been chaplains in noble families, and had formed intimate friendships with the ladies of those families. Although stern, uncompromising, even terrible, in the pulpit, their manners in private life were distinguished by an elegant courteousness; with ladies it might be called a delicate and refined flattery. They were learned even to pedantry; ever ready with classical quotations, and much addicted to that species of wit called punning. Anagrams, also, were a favorite exercise of their ingenuity, by which they contrived to convey a delicate eulogy, which the simple name could not express. If the position they occupied in the New World gave to their manners somewhat the air of superiority and dictatorial decision, it was an assumption so wholly unquestioned, a superiority so universally admitted, that they took precedence as by a divine right.

Naomi knew this, and was not surprised, therefore, when, the next day, the teachers and pastors of the Boston churches — there were now two — and the ministers of the neighbouring churches came to welcome her arrival, to find them perfect gentlemen, with a courteous politeness to ladies, a free and unrestrained pleasantry among themselves, with sparkling repartee and wit.

The Rev. Mr. Wilson was the earliest visitor, now

Digitized by Google

somewhat advanced in age, but yet distinguished by that sweetness of character and manner that caused him to be universally beloved. This epitaph, a few years later, bore nor false nor too flattering testimony to his urbanity. It was written in reference to his peculiar habit of turning every name into an anagram.

"JOHN WILSON.

" O, change it not! no sweeter name nor thing,
Throughout the world, within our ears shall ring."

Soon after came the Rev. John Norton, a dark-complexioned and somewhat stern-looking man, others of the most noted inhabitants, and some of the ministers of the adjoining towns. Boston was the centre of attraction at that time, as it now is, because of the market held every week, and the Thursday Lecture, although it had not the preëminence over Charlestown, Roxbury, Newtown, and Dorchester that it afterwards attained. The conversation was animated, enlivened with wit, and frequently garnished by allusions to classical subjects. The ministers even ventured upon Latin quotations, apologizing, however, to Naomi whenever this occurred. At the present day such apology would not be requisite; but now, when the ladies are taught Latin, gentlemen rarely venture upon a quotation for their benefit.

It was in the colony a most interesting time with regard to the mother country. Charles had just been restored to his throne, and, as I have said before, rumors had reached Boston of his displeasure at the treatment of the Quakers. *Home*, as England was then called, although with no expectation of ever returning there as to a home, was the place to which all referred, as to the supreme umpire in opinion. What will be said at home? what will be thought at home? was the question that

Digitized by Google

every one mentally asked. No one can read the records and letters of the time, without perceiving the extreme anxiety of the colonists to be thought well of in the mother country.

The conversation soon turned upon the absorbing subject of interest, the Quakers, and the terrible interruption of public worship yesterday. The ministers had observed Naomi's terror, but had mistaken its cause. Now again blazed forth the bitter spirit of persecution. The Rev. Mr. Norton, in the violence of his invective, cried out, "O, hang them! hang them all! or ——," and he made the sign of the axe across his throat.

"Ah!" cried another of the most intolerant, "I would not soil my hands with them; but I should be well content to see them riding to hell upon the shoulders of the Anabaptists."

Naomi ventured to lift up her voice; she said she condemned all their extravagances, and abhorred such an exhibition as they made yesterday in the church, but she thought their tenets were harmless when kept only as a solace within one's own breast.

There was a silence after this, and the ministers looked at each other. Naomi had expressed a dangerous heresy, but still they were unwilling, upon this their first interview, to treat her rudely. The Rev. Mr. Wilson said, — "Ah! my dear young lady, you plead the cause of the roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, with the tender voice of the lamb. There can be *no* harmless Quaker; we must destroy them, as we do the dangerous beast, the poisonous reptile."

Naomi was silent; she felt her heart sink within her. Her dejection was observed, and the Rev. Mr. Norton, to call back her thoughts, began to make pleasant remarks upon the Hebrew signification of her name. "Naomi,

Digitized by Google

beautiful-sweet"; it could only become Mara, *bitter*, he said, whenever she should think of leaving them.

Soon after, they took leave, courteously and pleasantly, but the ministers resolved in their hearts to observe Naomi more closely.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII.

"Take, then, my prayer, ye dwellers of this spot: —
Be yours a noiseless and a guiltless lot,
Free from the tyrants of the hour,
The clans of wealth, the clans of power,
The coarse, cold scorners of their God;
Free from the taint of sin,
The leprosy that feeds within,
And free, in mercy, from the bigot's rod.
Be purity of life the test,
Leave to the heart, to Heaven, the rest."

SPRAGUE.

My readers must not suppose that elders, teachers, and ministers were the only visitors who paid the respect of a visit to the newly arrived. The good dames and the young ladies of the town all hastened to see the person whose safe voyage had been announced the day before by a note of thanks from the pulpit. Attracted by sympathy and good-will, and no less by curiosity to observe the last fashion of dress from the mother country, they left Naomi hardly a day, during the first fortnight, without a succession of visitors. The simplicity of her own dress was the subject of excessive and almost incredulous surprise. It was just the intervening period in England between the farthingale (hoop), the monstrous starched ruff of Queen Elizabeth, and the studied negligence and elegant dishabille of the reign of Charles the Second.

Digitized by Google

Naomi was dressed in a full silk, of what is now a quiet color, — that is, not a rich nor striking tint, — with full sleeves, descending a few inches below the elbow, where they were confined by a band, leaving the snowy arm uncovered to the wrist. A broad falling collar of lace, called a vandyke, covered the neck and shoulders, and the hair was in natural curls around the temples and neck. Naomi's hair was soft and silky, and just waved in a natural undulation ; she had at this time folded and collected it behind with a bodkin, giving to the form of the head much the fashion of the present day.

This simple costume was, in fact, the latest fashion ; but to the good dames of Boston it seemed ridiculously plain, accustomed as they were to

> "Chains, coronets, pendants, bracelets, ear-rings ;
> Pins, girdles, spangles, embroideries, and rings ;
> Shadows, rebatoes, ribbons, ruffs, cuffs, falls,
> Scarfs, feathers, fans, masks, muffs, laces, cauls,
> Thin tiffany, cobweb lawn, and fardengals,
> Sweet falls, vayles, wimples, glasses, crispen pins,
> Coyfes, gorgets, fringes, rowles, fillets, and hair laces,
> Silks, damasks, velvets, tinsels, cloth of gold,
> And tissues of colors of a hundred fold."

The young people of Boston, both male and female, were never weary of asking Naomi questions about the mother country, and those who were placed on high, in stations of honor, were the principal subjects of their curiosity, — the profligate but still fascinating Charles, the ladies of the court, Mistress Nell Gwynn, of whom exaggerated tales had reached the little Puritan town. There was a peculiar fascination presented by the strong contrasts that existed at this time in manners and morals, often bringing together in the New World the extremes of Puritan asceticism on one side, and profligate indulgence on the other.

Digitized by Google

"Is it true," asked one of the young ladies, "that they have left all stays and stomachers at court, and appear in full dress, with only a sort of loose bed-gown, made, indeed, of silks and brocades, and trimmed with jewels and ribbons?"

Naomi said she had never been at court, but she believed negligence and ease had come into fashion, and that a lady could recline upon a couch in full dress, instead of standing bolt upright, as they did in the days of Queen Elizabeth.

"Ah!" said a young gentleman present, "the best of all is, they have got the players back. Glorious Will Shakspeare treads the boards again. Ah! that 's what I would go home for, to see one of his plays acted." And turning to Naomi, he asked abruptly, — "Have you been at the playhouse?"

There was a general look of consternation among the stricter portion of the company. Naomi was spared answering, by some one asking, at the same moment, "Had she been much at the Episcopal church?" Naomi had been to no other till after she had heard the preaching of George Fox. Her father's relatives, among whom she lived, were all for the king and the church; but Naomi could answer that she did not now go to church.

"Well," said the young gentleman, the advocate of the playhouse, "I can tell you a good story and a true one, for it happened in the family of one of my relations. Mr. Winthrop, the son of the governor, kept a great many books in an upper chamber in his house, among them a book of common prayer and the psalms of David bound together. Well, the rats, that were fond of visiting the library for their own delectation, seized hold of the common prayer and devoured every leaf, while the precious

Digitized by Google

psalms remained untouched. Now what do you think of that ? " he said, turning to Naomi. " Does it not prove that the prayer-book of the church ought to be destroyed, and that Providence will help the work by senseless beasts and vermin ? "

" I think it proves nothing, but that the honorable Winthrop did not keep a cat," said Naomi.

" Or," said one of the gentlemen, " that the prayer-book had been so much turned over, by not the neatest fingers in the world, — not by the gloved hands of young ladies, but by some right reverend who loved a good dinner, — that it had acquired a savory and oily flavor, more inviting to the epicure rats than the clean pages of the psalms."

Naomi smiled ; she thought it was the true solution of the miracle, but she was surprised to find so much freedom of speech upon the very spot of strictest Puritanism.

From fashion and the prayer-book, the conversation turned upon the Quakers, the all-absorbing subject at this period ; for, let the conversation take what course it would, it generally terminated by a dispute on the subject of the persecution of the Quakers. There was already a strong party in Boston, principally among the least rigid of the Puritans, who opposed the spirit of persecution, and believed the Quakers themselves would never molest Boston, were it not for the pleasure of notoriety and an eager desire for martyrdom.

" We will soon show you how we treat strangers," said one of these to Naomi ; " you will soon see a specimen of our politeness to strangers, especially of your own sex ; you will think, perhaps, that the days of chivalry have revived on this side of the water, when you see, perhaps at your next walk in the street, one of your own sex, as young, as tender, almost as delicate as yourself,

Digitized by Google

tied to a cart-tail, and followed by a rabble of boys and men, pelted with rotten apples and ——"

Seeing Naomi turn pale as death, he suddenly paused, and did not go on to complete the horrible picture of woman's bare shoulders "all gashed and gory."

"Do you know," said one of the young ladies to Naomi, "that, when I first saw you, I thought you were a Quaker?"

"Why so?" asked Naomi, the color returning to her cheeks.

"Well," said the other, "if you will not be offended, because your dress was so plain, and a certain composed air. To be sure you do not say *thee* and *thou*, and you go to meeting; but you know there are many who do not disapprove some of the tenets of the Quakers, and though these do not come out openly in their favor, and do not avow their own sentiments, they seem to me like wolves in sheep's clothing."

"Naomi is more like a lamb of the flock," said a young gentleman who stood by, "and she has not yet lost her beautiful ears"; for he observed that they were crimsoned, as was her whole countenance.

Naomi smiled, and said, in answer to the remark of the lady, — "If you have no better reason than the plainness of my dress, you must make all the court ladies Quakers, and all who adopt the new fashion."

There was a general laugh. Some of them imagined Mistress Gwynn a Quaker, and her beautiful shoulders scarred with the hangman's whip, and in the general hilarity that always somehow or other takes place when young people of both sexes, whether they be Puritans or the reverse, are collected together, Naomi's embarrassment escaped immediate observation, although it was well remembered against her in after days.

Digitized by Google

After becoming acquainted with the good people of Boston, Naomi endeavoured to become acquainted with Boston itself. At the risk of tiring my readers by repetition, I must impress upon them that no locality upon the face of the earth could be more beautiful to the eye of taste, than the picturesque aspect of this little town.

Embraced in the arms of its transparent and azure bay, while its beautiful breastwork of hills rose so high as to shelter it from the force of angry waves when tempests raged, and backed by its amphitheatre of gently swelling eminences, — its Charlestown, Newtown, Roxbury, and Matapan, for ever standing sentinels around the sacred spot, — it seemed as if Providence had reserved this lovely peninsula, had cleared it from hostile foes, and then had "sifted the nations," to send a chosen few to people it. God reserved the place for the people, and selected the people for the place.

In 1659 and 1660, the date of our narrative, the town had greatly increased in wealth and beauty. The principal houses of the tradesmen and gentry were around the market-place, where is now the old State-house. The highway, the principal road into the country, what is now Washington Street, was the great thoroughfare for country business; but large and handsome houses had also been built on Common Street, Hanover Street, and the North Square. These houses were not crowded as in our modern city, but were spacious dwellings, surrounded by "greens," gardens, and orchards. The Rev. Mr. Wilson had large orchards attached to his house. Rev. Mr. Cotton's house had been built by Sir Henry Vane, and presented to him by that gentleman when he returned to England. It stood on Common Street, near the spot where is now the Albion hotel, and was ascended by a flight of steps, and surrounded by fruit-trees and gardens.

Digitized by Google

None of the elevations and undulations of the natural arena had yet been levelled for the sake of more commodious streets. Wharves had been built out, and foot-bridges thrown over the running waters and the creeks that dissected the place, and gave it its refreshing aspect of streams of running water. The streets followed the curves of the valleys, and sometimes ascended the elevations, so that whoever traversed Boston must follow the nursery song, —

> "Here we go up, up, up,
> Here we go down, down, down."

There were many beautiful overhanging thickets close to the streets, filled with hanging branches, and the whole of Beacon Hill was covered with a dense shrubbery of wild plants, interspersed with low pines and cedar-bushes. It was also full of springs of water, which, at the breaking up of winter, after they had been fed with the winter's snow, overflowed and became little cascades, leaping from height to height upon the declivities of Beacon Hill. A path had been cleared with steps leading to the beacon, around which were placed some rude benches; but all else retained the inexpressible charm of primitive wildness, and in a summer's morning a delightful fragrance arose upon the dewy air, the mingled odors of hundreds of wild plants indigenous to this favored spot. At the foot of Beacon Hill lay the training-field or common, having much the aspect from that height which it has at present. For although it was not polished and regular as at the present day, the primeval trees of the forest waved over the greensward, as they had been left in irregular groups and masses.

This half-rural, half-fortified, and wholly peaceful and prosperous town possessed for Naomi an inexpressible charm. Boston was at this time worthy, as it has ever

Digitized by Google

since been, of the deep love, the strongest and most respectful attachment, of its sons and daughters. Who would not be proud of its origin and its history? All the people were the children of the town, and until the Quaker madness none had been oppressed.

It is true, Mrs. Hutchinson and her followers had been banished; but banished only from this soil and territory. The wide country was open to them; they could go elsewhere and enjoy their own tenets, and teach them elsewhere. The fathers of Boston wished no mischievous, busy, interfering woman in their united household, slandering the most honored members of their large family, and they denied her a lodging-place in any of the chambers of their family mansion. They were not capable of that wide and indiscriminate hospitality of him of Merry Mount,* which admitted heretics, thieves, and wassailers into his domestic circle. They were not inquisitors; they did not burn her for her heresies; they merely turned her from their premises, and shut the door in her face.

Until the year preceding that of which we write, no forfeiture of life for opinions had stained the annals of the colony. "Hardly a nation of Europe has yet made its criminal law as humane as that of Massachusetts until this period."† Until this time the laws of Boston had been the unwritten code of the Christian heart. On that beautiful bay no blood of Abel cried out against his brother, till the Quakers, whom our fathers called the children of the Devil, thrust themselves, with their wild blasphemies, into the midst, to try men's souls.

Boston had never since its foundation been more pros-

* See the account of Morton, in the annals of the time.

† Bancroft.

Digitized by Google

perous than at this time. Cromwell had favored New England. Commerce was flourishing beyond all precedent; for "all goods imported to or from Massachusetts were free from all custom, taxation, or duty, either inward or outward." They were at peace with the Indians; the Pequots had been subdued. Charles had returned to the throne of his fathers, but Massachusetts was sufficiently loyal. They did not yet tremble for the loss of their charter, or for fear of royal governors. It seemed as though the Quaker irruption, as it might be called, was permitted by Providence to try their souls, to see how far prosperity had hardened their hearts, or how far their own religious privileges had made them forgetful of the consciences of others. On this clear and beautiful horizon we have just sketched, a little cloud arose, "no bigger than a man's hand," but it ascended and spread till it enveloped the whole country in gloom.

Naomi, as I have said, was charmed with the external aspect of her new home. She had scarcely been there two weeks when she ascended the steps that led to the summit of Beacon Hill, to take a birdseye view of the whole environment. When she looked upon the bay, it was dotted all over with boats passing from Cambridge, from Charlestown, Dorchester, and from various other points; for this placid expanse of water was not then covered with a network of bridges, and the perpetual passage of boats and darting of the Indian canoe gave a life and animation to the scene quite unknown to us. Besides the ferry-boats constantly passing from point to point, many gentlemen kept boats rowed by their own servants, and had they been gondolas, Boston would have been almost a miniature Venice. If the water was alive, the land-side presented to Naomi a picture of beautiful repose; — the flocks and herds of cattle, feeding upon

Digitized by Google

the lonely meadows of Brookline, shaded by large timber-trees, with scattered cottages upon the rising ground; the town of Roxbury, clustering around its rocks and nestling in its hills, its meeting-house upon a conspicuous height; the modest college on the plain of Cambridge; the fresh-springing husbandry and peaceful wigwams of the Indians at Nonantum; the gracefully elevated land upon the north, now known as Breed's, Bunker, and Prospect Hills; the full-swelling, all-embracing sea;— and her heart bounded with exultation and gratitude. She saw that "the land was blessed by the blessing of heaven above, and the blessing of the deep beneath; blessed by the dew upon the mountains, and the deep that coucheth beneath."

While Naomi stood upon the summit of Beacon Hill, the shrill sound of drums and fifes rose upon the calm air, and soon the more emphatic voice of "loud-babbling guns" was heard. As she descended the easier slope of the southern side, she saw the training-field, or common, covered with people. The "great artillery company" was in the field; also many other companies, armed with firelock or pike. It was one of the training-days, so frequent in the early part of our history. Scarcely any condition of rank or age exempted the people from the duty of being thus prepared for the defence of their families and their firesides, when Indian foes were all around, and the duty of protecting the country was next to the duty of worshipping God.

As Naomi passed the side of the field, separated from her only by a fence of rails, it was a solemn and impressive sight; the captain of each company had called his soldiers into close order, and, with every head bent upon a pike or a musket, each was at prayer at the head of his company. As the murmur of their voices reached Na-

Digitized by Google

omi, there was something deeply impressive and beautiful in this act of the citizen soldiers, in arms to protect their homes and their country, but relying upon the aid of a higher power. Prayer preceded and followed the thunder of the great artillery. Their preparation for battle was a religious preparation, for they believed themselves, like the Israelites of old, ordained to drive out the heathen before them, and to take possession of the country.

As Naomi naturally hesitated at such a moment to cross the training-field alone, she retraced her steps in order to pass through what is now called School Street, to her home in Washington Street. As she turned into School Street, she saw an immense crowd of men, boys, and even a few women, filling the whole breadth of the street, around a guard of soldiers with drums, that to her sounded lugubrious, like the muffled drum of death. She was going to meet one of those atrocious processions that too often disgraced the highways of the country. In the midst of the crowd was an ox-cart drawn by two oxen, with two innocent women — innocent of every thing but Quakerism — chained to the tail of the cart, the sheriff and constable, both honored men, on each side with knotted whips, charged to inflict the disgraceful torture of lacerating the unprotected shoulders of these women. One of the women was so aged that it seemed as if her feeble veins could scarcely spare the crimson drops that followed at every lash of the whip. The other was young and fair. Even here, in this most horrible exhibition of dark bigotry and cruel power, a touching circumstance softened it to the eye, while it made the heart swell with mingled pity and indignation. The young husband of the younger victim, himself not a Quaker, walked close to the cart, and, while his face was ashy

Digitized by Google

pale and tears streamed down his cheeks, at every stroke, whenever the lash descended, he interposed his hat and his arm to spare the tender, but already crimsoned, flesh of his young wife.

Naomi was fain to enter the first open door, to hide from her the too horrible scene. An inexpressible indignation and disgust, mingled perhaps with fear, caused a nervous spasm, that was only relieved by a burst of tears.

As soon as the terrible procession had passed, she returned to her home, with many new and painful feelings contending in her breast. Then came the most distressing of all doubts, the doubt whether she had acted rightly in coming to America. Ought she thus to have thrust her head between the jaws of the lion? Ought she not to have avowed the difference of her religion, and taken the consequences, when she first arrived? But these questions arose from the depressed state of her mind. She had obeyed the voice of her mother and of her own heart in coming, and it was in consequence of the providence of God that she was left alone to bear the responsibilities and the trials of her new faith. Her heart disavowed that stern and severe religion of the Puritans which enjoined persecution, and forbade her to love those who differed from her, and yet she could never partake of or excuse the extravagances and follies, almost the blasphemies, of the Quakers.

She felt herself alone, — alone in the world and alone in her religious faith, — for she could not sympathize or mingle with those who professed the same faith that she believed, and the faith of the Puritans repelled all the sympathies of her soul. "For what, then," she thought, "shall I labor to purify my affections and elevate my soul; why should I strive for a pure conscience, for

Digitized by Google

principles of rectitude and courage, for generosity and love, for patience and calm endurance? I, who am alone in the world, and in all these precious attainments can find no sympathy." This feeling of utter loneliness drew tears down her cheeks; but soon the skeptical hour and the skeptical thought passed away. "God," she thought, "is knowledge and love. He will see the open and transparent tablet of my heart; he will not leave me always alone. He alone has seen my struggles; he alone knows the purity of the motives that have influenced my course."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII.

"There doth exist
A beauty boasting a perpetual prime,
That the destroyer's scythe has ever missed.
Age lays no wrinkle on its fair aspect,
Its sweet complexion ne'er was known to fade,
It steals no grace from gauds wherewith 't is decked;
From cunning art it never looks for aid.
This quality, of such great eminence,
Hath for its name and title EXCELLENCE."

THE death of Naomi's mother had totally changed for her the aspect of the New World, and the horizon of her home. Did she find the solace and comfort that could still render it an agreeable and peaceful retreat? Her step-father was a man of outward forms, not of genuine feeling. Although he treated her with all external respect, Naomi soon discovered that he was extremely jealous of any difference in opinion from himself. He had acquired the influence he possessed in a certain course of formal observances. He had long been a member of the church, a member of the General Court, always at his post, and always for strenuous and severe measures, — a careful noter and shrewd discoverer of all deviations from external observances of morality. He made long prayers to show his piety, and he kept the

Digitized by Google

Sabbath strictly, because he was a member of the church, and would have lost caste otherwise. He deviated in nothing from what was respectable and expected in that community whose opinions ruled his life. He was one of those blocks, squared and polished and neatly fitted into the great building of the commonwealth, but which admitted no external flaw or irregularity where the winds of heaven could lodge a chance and precious seed, to spring up into a flower to adorn and scent the surrounding air.

He never suspected that Naomi's mind was more enlarged and nobler than his own, but he felt a jealous uneasiness whenever she ventured to differ from him, and an obstinate conviction that she must be wrong. No conception had ever entered his mind of that all-pervading love, that could infold all opinions within a divine philanthropy; that could soften all asperities, as the atmosphere rounds the world and makes equal the rugged mountain and the lowly valley.

Naomi soon found there could be no confidence between them; even friendship could not exist upon his side, for he was totally unable to appreciate the nobler qualities of her mind; and how could he feel friendship for a person of whom he was, although unconsciously, jealous lest her superiority should betray his narrow views? She could only live peacefully with her father-in-law (she thanked God the relation was no nearer) by never expressing an opinion that differed from his own, — by silencing in his presence every expanding emotion, every generous purpose, — by locking within her own heart all those views that he pronounced visionary or immoral.

Mr. Aldersey's jealousy of his own authority in the smallest things, as well as in those of consequence, made it difficult to preserve the respect that Naomi thought due

Digitized by Google

to her mother's husband. His will was as absolute in the fold of a curtain, or the placing of a chair, as in attention to the Sabbath, or the observance of family prayers. He had a *good deal* of a *little* mind, and entered into all the minutiæ of family affairs, bought the spices for his family and the shoes for his clerks, attended to the cutting out of the clothes of men-servants, and censured the dress of the maids in his family. In short, he was one of those cold, determined, obstinate, yet meddling persons, with whom it is hard to live, and yet difficult to assign a reason for hating.

Ruth, the little daughter of her mother, was distinguished only as a pretty and lively child; she had now attained her thirteenth year, and Naomi had accepted the charge of her as a sacred legacy from that dear mother. But Ruth began to display a character of her own, that would scarcely yield to Naomi's influence. The little girl soon found that she possessed an ascendency over her father, merely from the circumstance of being his own daughter. Precisely in proportion as a thing was his own, was its value in the eyes of Mr. Aldersey. His daughter belonged exclusively to himself. She was a part of himself; her value in his eyes was greater than that of his property, his farm, his merchandise. She was more prized than any thing except himself, his standing in the church, his estimation in the community. Whatever faults he was clear-sighted enough to discern in Ruth were scarcely admitted by himself, much less avowed to others. She had hitherto disclosed, indeed, only the faults of a petted child, but she now began to display a strong will of her own. She often opposed, and even stood out against the mild expostulations of Naomi, and it was easy to see, that, encouraged by her father, she would soon assume a position in the family to which Naomi, superior as she was, would yield.

Digitized by Google

Naomi was eminently formed to inspire love ; there was in her a tenderness and sympathy for others, a sweetness of countenance and a gentle tone of voice, that went to the heart of those capable of appreciating such qualities. They felt that she was not a person to whom any flattery could be offered, or any homage expressed, except that of the silent heart, and her own humility and the simplicity of her character prevented her from perceiving the influence her noble qualities exerted. With transparent truth on every feature, she stood there in her pure upright self, and those who could appreciate the worth of her character would alone adhere to her. Ruth loved her sister because she had become necessary to her. She was the person upon whom she could throw the responsibility of her actions, and make her a kind of external conscience, to save her from the inconvenience of governing herself. Naomi was too gentle to contend with her sister. Her moral courage was great, and in every thing involving a principle she was firm as a rock ; but the sensitiveness of her organization, and the sweetness of her disposition, made her shrink from every harsh contest, and yield every thing but truth ; her influence, therefore, if she retained any over Ruth, was that of truthful simplicity and silent example.

There was still another person upon whom the well-being of Naomi in her father's house greatly depended. This was Faith, the friend, rather than the servant, of her mother, who nursed her in her illness, and upon whom, after her death, the domestic care of the family devolved. Faith was plain in her person, her features rather masculine, and her complexion dark and sallow ; but, with all these disadvantages, the comfort of the family depended on her. We often hear of nature's nobility ; Faith was one of nature's common children, but she possessed all

Digitized by Google

the best qualities of a true woman. The influence she gained over every one, even over Mr. Aldersey himself, was not that of a strong mind over a weak one, but it was that of truth and love, blended in just proportions, and acting with quiet unostentation. Faith, plain in person, unattractive in feature, was the mental stay, the source of contentment, the sunlight, of the house where she dwelt. Her perpetual cheerfulness dispersed all gloom, and in all the embarrassments, troubles, and perplexities that arise in a family, she was the ready recourse; an immediate trust was felt that all would go right as soon as Faith's transparent truth and strong good-sense were brought to bear upon the subject. She was the only person to whom Mr. Aldersey was ever known to yield; not because she assumed authority, — she was truly humble, — but because he saw the good-sense and the propriety of her arrangements.

Naomi could soon appreciate and sympathize with such a character. All that was good and noble in the one soon understood and loved what was good and noble in the other; yet there was a rich and unexplored region in Naomi's mind that Faith could not penetrate, as there were minutiæ of disinterested goodness in Faith to which Naomi had not accustomed herself to descend. Naomi's aspiration and thirst after something different and better were in Faith's view a distrust of Providence, a want of faith in God, who would in his own time order every thing for the best good of all. To Faith the world was good enough. Her imagination did not aspire to a better till the millennium or heaven arrived. Injustice, ingratitude, excited her grief and indignation, but she saw in them beneficent trials for the faith and patience of others. Her soul was amply fed at church, and at family prayers, for her own grateful and devout thoughts accompanied the pious words that were received into a humble, not a

Digitized by Google

doubting, heart. She could gather honey from the thistle, and never observed the hypocrisy or the formality of others. To her the New England church was the glory of the whole earth. She had no time for lofty speculations or ideal aspirations ; her strong good-sense acted upon the things of the actual world around her, and her benevolence was busied in devising good for those about her in every-day life. There was enough in the well-worn path of life, she thought, to employ all her faculties to keep it clear of thorns, to smooth the rough places that incommoded the feet of those she loved ; when we were furnished with wings, she thought, it would be time enough to find out the places to which we could soar.

The health, the food, the warmth, the comfort, of every member of that household was her care ; for herself alone she was never busy. If Faith was seen warming her hands, they knew it was for the service of another ; if she wore a muff in cold weather, or a veil in warm, it was to protect some other's hands and face ; in all excursions upon the land or the water, Faith was furnished with furs and cloaks, not for herself, but for the comfort of every other. None were forgotten. Beauty, as I have said before, is of the soul ; and for those who could discern, the divine rays of this most lovely soul penetrated the rougher clay in which it was enshrined, so that Faith's countenance produced upon them the effect of beauty, and was seen with a lively joy.

The poor Indians knew her well. They called her their little mother. To their untaught perceptions, the queen of beauty herself would not have been so lovely as the pale and dark-featured Faith. They well understood the homely saying, that " Handsome is that handsome does." On her side, the Indians were all her especial care, her children. She was too humble to be aware of

Digitized by Google

the influence exerted upon the educated and refined, but the poor Indian she knew she could instruct and aid. Faith's good-sense would have suggested to the Rev. Mr. Eliot, their faithful evangelist, that civilization and physical comfort should have preceded conversion ; that the squaw should have made the wigwam neat before she attended the lecture, and should have been taught to make her garments before she was taught to pray.

Between Faith and Sambo there was a perpetual war of opinion, on account of the Indians. Sambo felt a lofty superiority to the whole race of Indians. He seemed to regard them as a sort of humble attempt at imitation of the African, — a caricature, an exaggeration and perpetuation of certain defects of which he was conscious in his own countrymen, — and he felt a sort of indignant contempt, such as some great author or painter may be supposed to feel at his host of imitators, lest some one should come so near to his excellences, so attain to his peculiar distinctions, as to be mistaken the copyist for the original. He never spake of the Indians but as vermin, inferior to dogs, and Faith, by the friendship she showed them, had nearly lost the light of Sambo's countenance, and the distinction of his patronage. He was in perpetual fear lest Naomi, too, should be misled by Faith, and unable to note the distinctions between himself and the Indians that would establish his superiority.

Mr. Aldersey kept up much traffic with the Indians for costly furs, upon which he made immense profits. It was for his interest to induce them to come to his house, and the chiefs were always invited to sit at his table. Before Naomi arrived, Mr. Aldersey kept the head of his own table ; but he had now placed Naomi there, and the Indians, with distinctive politeness, sometimes addressed themselves to the pale-faced squaw.

Digitized by Google

Naomi felt a deep interest in the Indian squaws. The subdued and sad expression of the burdened and worn creatures went straight to her heart. She never failed to see and express her interest in them, when they came to see their "little mother." Before she came to America, Eliot had obtained her highest veneration ; and when she saw Faith, surrounded by the humble creatures, dispensing to them the bread of life indeed, in her simple instructions, as well as the physical comforts they so greatly needed, she longed also to be a comforter and instructor to their simple souls.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX.

"Alas for them! their day is o'er;
Their fires are out from hill and shore;
No more for them the wild deer bounds,
The plough is on their hunting-grounds;
The pale man's axe rings through their woods,
The pale man's sail skims o'er their floods;
Their pleasant springs are dry."

In a narrative that aims to be a description, a living picture, of the times of our fathers, it would be an omission hardly to be excused to leave out the red man of the forest. Among the objects of interest that environed Naomi, the Indians took the deepest hold upon her imagination. Before she came, she had pictured them to herself, enjoying the simple life God had given them; dwelling securely under the shadow of their rocks; launching their frail canoes upon the turbulent waves of that deep and wide ocean; floating upon the bosom of their noble rivers; enjoying the full blessing of a natural and sentient life; worshipping the Great and Good Spirit, that they felt was everywhere around them, — in the rock, in the fountain, in the leaf, and in the cloud; fearing only the evil principle opposed to the good. But now, when she was on the spot, she heard of "Christian Indians," "praying Indians," and her interest was excited

Digitized by Google

to become acquainted with their spiritual father, him who was called their Apostle.

Naomi had already seen them in great numbers, as the Indian women often gathered in Mr. Aldersey's kitchen, bringing their simple manufactures of buskins wrought with porcupine-quills, birch and willow baskets, and wampum-belts, to exchange for little comforts for their wigwams; but she wished to see them more nearly in their civilized and Christian state, in their village at Nonantum, where it was said they had learnt agriculture and housekeeping, and governed themselves by laws of their own making.

In order to see them under the best auspices, she wished to accompany Mr. Eliot, the evangelist, when he went to hold one of his lectures in their simple wigwams. Soon her wish was gratified, and the apostle himself came to propose a time to visit his new converts. The personal appearance of the Rev. Mr. Eliot instantly won the attention and interest of those who could look beneath the surface. Small in stature and rather plain, his countenance was wasted and worn, as though he had suffered much privation and fatigue; but his eye, deep-seated beneath his brow, lighted up with an intense inward fire, or melted into the softest expression of tenderness and compassion. Every movement and expression of that rather insignificant person disclosed an unconquerable energy, and unwearied and never-yielding constancy of purpose; how else could he have accomplished what he did? Much of his power over the wild men depended upon that speaking eye, and upon a voice capable of every tone that penetrates the heart. Such a voice is a direct gift from the soul; no art can imitate, and no words describe, its power; a contemporary, in speaking of this voice, said, "that, when he opened his lips, they

Digitized by Google

were like Mary's box of ointment; the whole room was filled with perfume." His whole appearance showed a nervous organization and a tenderness of heart opposed to the dogmas of his creed. The spiritual means by which he strengthened his soul to bear his almost insupportable labors was prayer, often spending whole days in solitary meditation and fasting. Great reformers of every age have thus furnished themselves with spiritual armour, before they have gone forth to bless and instruct the world.

An afternoon in October had been fixed upon for Naomi to accompany the reverend apostle of the Indians to Nonantum, to see his poor converts and listen to his instruction to his humble children. It was one of those cloudless and perfect days of which we have so many in our New England autumn, with the temperature of June, yet more prized than June itself, because the evening approaches earlier, and the hours of sunlight, as they are briefer, are more precious.

Immediately after the early dinner of that period, the party proceeded to the small private wharf where Mr. Aldersey's boat lay, with his own servants ready to take the oars. Sambo had at first begged permission to be left behind, alleging pressing work to be done at home. But afterwards, fearing that Naomi might receive wrong impressions from the great attention that was paid the Indians, he appeared at the thwart ready to take the oar, but dressed in his most exquisite style. Mr. Aldersey good-naturedly excused him from rowing, perceiving the impression he wished to make upon the Indians by the superiority of his dress, and told him to take charge of the cloaks and furs that Faith had provided for their return.

They left the town, and passed on their course the arable fields of Muddy River (Brookline), where there

Digitized by Google

were many snug farm-cottages, and cattle enjoying the late pasturage of that beautiful shore, presenting a picture of repose and fertility that forcibly reminded Naomi of the tranquil homesteads of England. Then the Charles became narrower, and their little boat was sheltered by the overhanging trees of its margin. No bridges obstructed their progress till they landed at a spot where now spreads a flourishing town, but where then brooded over the whole scene the silence and tranquillity of an unbroken solitude. A little farther on, they came to the plain where the Indians had placed their village of wigwams. It was dotted over with trees, and intersected by a winding brook, while all around this cleared space of cornfields and rude gardens the unbroken forest spread its protecting arms.

Mr. Aldersey's family were almost the earliest upon the ground, and it was evident the Indians were preparing for some unusual and exciting event. As Naomi and Faith walked around, and glanced into some of their wigwams, the chiefs were painting and preparing their toilets; the women, also, were sweeping the front of their wigwams, with the design of assuming an exquisite neatness. When the Indian chiefs issued, in all their finery, from the blankets which were suspended before the doors of their poor birch-built dwellings, it was surprising how so much splendor of decoration could be applied in so poor a habitation. The chiefs were clad in robes of dressed deer-skins, richly ornamented with colored beads, with fringes, and wampum-belts. Plumes of different birds were arranged, in some instances with great symmetry and taste, to form an imposing head-dress, and the single eagle's feather overshadowed in many more the horridly painted face. The women, on the contrary, with the exception of a few that were evi-

Digitized by Google

dently the dusky belles of the tribe, were without ornament in dress or person, and the children were almost or quite naked.

As different parties of the white inhabitants arrived and strolled around their village, the Indians, both men and women, assumed a proud indifference of manner, a stolid quietude of mien; even Faith, their little mother and warm-hearted friend, was received with cold dignity. A seat was brought for her, indeed, and one for the pale-face queen, as they called Naomi, a distinction which the appearance of her mental superiority could alone have induced, for her dress was inferior in gayety or richness to many there. The women, meantime, hushed their infants to sleep, and the men lounged in various attitudes of stern repose, eying their visitors with a sullen and haughty affectation of superiority.

At length Mr. Eliot and a few of his brethren appeared, and immediately a sort of quiet bustle ensued. They had ridden from Roxbury; and the chiefs hastened, although with proud and stately steps, to relieve them of their horses, which were tethered in the woods. The little bronzed children escaped from their mothers, and clustered around the good man, encouraged by his benevolent smile to thrust their hands into his ample pocket, where they always found the apples and cakes he placed there for this very purpose. The secret in part of the evangelist's influence over these wild children of nature was his attention to the minute details of their comfort, his exact justice, his indulgent condescension to the claims of the lowliest squaw and the youngest child. An instance of his just legislation occurred immediately after he came on the ground.

A young, athletic, and handsome Indian approached, and complained that his wife refused to go into the woods

Digitized by Google

and bring home the deer he had slain for their food. He had, he said, done his part ; he had killed the game, and it was the duty of every squaw to bring it home, however distant it might lie from the wigwam, and to dress it for her husband's repast. This, in the laws of Indian civilization, was true, and the refusal of obedience was so unusual a thing in Indian domestic life, that Mr. Eliot desired the wife might be called to answer to the charge against her.

She was found stretched upon a mat in the wigwam ; but she came, a poor young creature, panting, emaciated, and apparently far gone in consumption. Every one looked on in pity. Mr. Eliot kindly bade her take up one of the saddles that was lying on the ground and place it on the nearest horse. The poor, humble creature obeyed ; she made the effort, and had nearly got the saddle raised to the horse's back, when she trembled, staggered, and fell back fainting into the arms of one who stood near. Mr. Eliot turned and looked at the strong, athletic young Indian who had brought the complaint. It was enough ; he slunk away, mortified and ashamed.

The assembly of Indians and whites had now increased so that no wigwam was sufficient for their accomodation. It was therefore suggested that the sermon should be preached in the open air, under the spreading shelter of the noble hemlocks and pines that abounded in the place. It now became a scene of touching and deep interest. The venerable Eliot placed himself with the elders and teachers upon a small eminence, under the shadow of an ancient hemlock, whose deeply-dark and spreading branches threw an imposing shade upon the noble and serious faces of the pale men, contrasting so strongly with the brilliant October sunshine, and heightening their striking dissimilitude with the dusky children of the for-

Digitized by Google

est. These were gathered round in peaceful groups, their gaudy and wild garments floating in the air, and striking the eye in lively contrast with the sombre attire of their visitors, their dark and serious faces all turned towards the apostle. Upon a few of these bronzed features could be traced the varying emotions of their souls, — curiosity, wonder, love, — while others retained the imperturbable stolidity of the Indian, and turned away in sullen and proud indifference.

Behind the groups of men the savage women crouched, in attitudes expressive of their sense of inferiority to their lords, their meek, subdued countenances stamped with the seal of patient endurance and humble servitude.

Outside of these was what might be called the congregation of the whites, collected from different motives; some, indeed, with contempt upon their countenances, but all hushed into serious and solemn attention, their usual and habitual seriousness at all religious exercises heightened, by the peculiar scene around them, to a devout reverence; the waving trees, with the dirge-like sound of the wind in their branches, the echo from the far-off hills, which seemed like the voices of guardian spirits confirming all that was said, and the deep-blue overhanging canopy, the eye of God himself, looking down upon them.

Among these groups, and as near as possible to the Indians, were Naomi and her companions, with Sambo in close attendance. Mr. Aldersey had joined the group of teachers under the hemlocks.

The reverend Eliot began the service with a prayer in English, pronounced with the deep pathos of that voice always so touching. The wind made, as it were, melodious responses, as it stirred the reedy branches of the hemlock. Every heart was touched and soothed, and

Digitized by Google

the Indian women, although they understood not a word, were melted into tears. How appropriate was the text that he chose for his Indian sermon! — "Come from the four winds, O breath (or spirit), and breathe upon these that they may live! So the breath came unto them, and they lived and stood upon their feet." The sermon was very long, and topics drawn from every abstruse branch of theology were discussed; but it was listened to with unflagging attention. When the preacher spoke of the love and suffering of the Saviour, the Son of God, mingled pity, and sorrow, and indignation struggled upon the uplifted faces of the women, and many of them wept aloud. This seemed to show the kind of preaching they needed; not the abstruse doctrines of Calvinism, but the tender love of the Gospel. They whose souls were so warm, so tender, so quickly excited to love, so easily melted to pity, — would not, under such instruction, the native rock of the Indian have been covered with the rich bloom of wild-flowers? But now they have passed away with the wind that breathed upon them; no trace of their foot-prints is left.

After the sermon took place the burial of a little Indian child. The father of the child wished it to be in the English mode, and had himself made a coffin, and invited his friends to follow in procession. The mother consented, although she could not forego the Indian custom of dressing the little emaciated body in all the finery it had worn upon gala-days. About forty Indians followed in procession, in solemn silence, without their powwows and noise; the men with stern, composed, and solemn faces, the women silent, with their eyes cast down, except the poor mother, from whose lips at every moment a stifled groan burst forth. At the little grave the father prayed in their own Indian language, and then each, as

Digitized by Google

he silently turned away, threw a handful of earth upon it. The mother only stood in mute sorrow, and would not leave the grave till the turf was again placed over her dead treasure.

Naomi had been attracted to the spot; she looked in silence into the grave; there lay the little bow and arrow by his side, and a small gourd at the head of the coffin. Naomi respected the mother's grief, but she ventured to ask why, as she had buried her child in a coffin, after the English fashion, she placed his bow and arrow by his side.

"How should I know my brave boy," she answered, "in the happy hunting-grounds, if he had not his bow and his arrow? He will be a chief and not a squaw in the blessed hunting-grounds, and how should I know him again without his bow and his arrow?"

The little procession turned aside into a thick grove, and there they lifted up their voices and wept aloud, as they prayed in their own language. Naomi also wept with them; — the prayer that comes from a bereaved mother's heart carries with it the sympathy of every other heart.

A different scene was taking place in another part of the Indian village. A powerful sachem of one of the tribes had listened with scorn and contempt to Eliot's preaching, and before it was finished withdrew, anger and revenge burning in his breast; and, as he withdrew, he carried with him several of the bravest of his tribe. He had two subjects of complaint and offence; one was, that the "praying Indians" had refused to pay him the usual tribute; and the other, that the Rev. Mr. Eliot had preached much against the sin of a plurality of wives. He felt deeply under this censure, having just taken a second young wife, although his elder squaw had ever

Digitized by Google

been a faithful and devoted spouse. The apostle had before taken occasion to admonish him in private, but to-day in his sermon he took the opportunity to enlarge very powerfully, and, as the sachem thought, much too personally, upon this great sin of the chiefs.

After the sermon was ended, he approached Mr. Eliot, and with violent and imperious gesture declared that the apostle should never set foot again within his village. The savages trembled at the anger of their chief, and began to slink away and hide themselves like guilty creatures. But Mr. Eliot, without betraying weakness or inferiority, answered, with the promptest resolution and calm, unblenching firmness, that he should do the work of the Great Spirit that he was sent to do, and that he neither feared him nor any thing that he could do. The savage could not stand before the firm and kindling eye of the apostle; he cowered beneath its sacred light, and the tribe again crowded around their teacher.

When Mr. Eliot took leave, the chief followed him, and stated the difficulties of his situation. The apostle treated him kindly, and spoke aside with Governor Endicott, who was just mounting his horse to ride back with him to Roxbury. "The thing shall be looked into," the governor said, "and the teachers shall discourse upon it and give them the true doctrine at the next lecture." Then, turning to the Indians, he courteously invited them all to come next Thursday to the lecture, when the ministers should deal with them.

The chiefs now, with stately gravity, took leave, and Eliot and his friends pursued their way, through bridle-paths in the woods, to their respective homes.

In another part of the ground almost a ludicrous scene was taking place. Sambo had involved himself in a dispute with one of the dusky belles, that amounted almost

Digitized by Google

to a quarrel, — Sambo, usually so good-humored and tranquil. I have before mentioned his extreme jealousy of the Indians, and the superiority he himself assumed over them, as though their grand and noble forms, their firm, upright tread and heavenward bearing, were but a caricature of the African race.

The Indian belle, to get rid of the importunity of his too polite attentions, told him that his little mother, meaning Faith, wanted him. "Run," said the girl, "you dare not disobey."

Sambo indignantly scorned the idea of standing in that relation to Faith, or in any relation that implied obedience. The housekeeper, he said, was no mother of his, and he scorned to obey any woman except Miss Omai.

"Well," said the Indian girl, "I guess the little mother better to you than your own mammy, for when you were a little pappoose swinging on the great tree, she let her little piccaninni fall and spoiled his nose"; and she burst into a laugh, and held up the palm of her hand, to imply that his face was as free from protuberance as her own hand.

Sambo's indignation knew no bounds. His complexion changed to the color of a deep-purple plum, where the crimson juice is seen ready to burst its dark envelope. To be insulted thus openly was more than the meekest spirit could bear. But at this moment Naomi and Faith appeared. He smothered his griefs, and followed them from the village.

The sun had now sunk behind the forest, and was but a half-hour from its setting. The crimson rays shot beneath the boughs and touched the old trunks, and played in variegated light upon the rich embroidery of the mossy stems, and the deeper green of little opening vistas was lighted up with emerald brilliancy. Above the forest was

Digitized by Google

diffused a pale tint of orange, and a faint hue of apple-green, so beautiful in the autumn sunsets of this climate; and these gradually changed into deep, dark blue and the violet shades of the eastern horizon.

Naomi and the friends who accompanied her sought their boat. A western breeze had sprung up, the sail was spread, and the oarsmen rested idly upon their oars. The full harvest moon now rose over those broad and tranquil waters. As the planet rose higher in the heavens, she hung like a perfect ball of light, moving among heaps of fleecy clouds, that sometimes obscured her wholly, and then, like snowy wreaths of vapor or islands of fleece, received her in their bosom. Deep silence was in that solitary boat; Naomi was reflecting upon the scene she had witnessed, and the others were overcome with fatigue. The moon touched the humble roofs of the cabins along the shore, and glanced in mysterious change of light and shadow among the trees that hung over the margin of the river along which they glided. The profound melancholy of the scene cannot be expressed in words, — the unbroken solitude of a scene now overpeopled and alive with human activity. No busy commerce, no thronged wharves, no clustering houses, crowded the land upon the water. The soul was alone with nature. As they passed the sylvan shores of Brookline, the lofty trees formed islands of floating shadow upon the grass, where the cattle reposed in groups, and their startled guardians, the watch-dogs, broke the repose of the night as the sound of the oars awoke the echoes upon land.

The boat at length touched the little wharf. Naomi went to her pillow with peaceful and tranquil emotions. Her visit to the Indian village had been the most purely congenial scene she had witnessed in New England.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X.

"O, doubly lost! oblivion's shadows close
Around their triumphs and their woes.
Nor lofty pile, nor glowing page,
Shall link him to a future age,
Or give him with the past a rank;
His heraldry is but a broken bow,
His history but a tale of wrong and woe;
His very name must be a blank." — SPRAGUE.

THURSDAY, the day of the lecture, had now arrived; the day on which the Indians were to present themselves in the assembly of the pale-faces, to be taught their duty both with regard to paying tribute to the sachem and the domestic custom that touched them so nearly, the plurality of wives. The children of the forest had been frequently seen at the lecture, but to-day they were to appear, as it were, in their national character, and much importance was attached to the event. Cutshamakin, although he understood no English, was to make his appearance to protest against, or to interpret in his own wild way, the solemnity of the scene.

The Thursday Lecture was usually crowded, for there were other incentives offered to those who dwelt in the neighbouring towns beside that which was always paramount, hearing the preached word, to visit Boston on

Digitized by Google

Thursday; even the people of Salem, some of them travelling on foot, were sure to be at the Thursday Lecture. It was their weekly market-day, and the good people of Boston have ever shown themselves willing to unite the pursuit of an honest gain with a devout exhibition of religious observances.

Early in the morning the repose of the little town was broken by the rumbling of carts from the country, and the arrival of countrymen on horseback with well-filled saddle-bags, containing their domestic manufactures of cloths from the family loom, shoes from the farmer's winter work-bench, cheeses and butter, the generous produce of new and rich pastures. Cattle and sheep, calves and swine, were sold in the same market, so that the little market-place soon presented a crowded and animated scene of bustle and lively interest. At eleven o'clock the weekly holiday began at the schools, and the exuberant spirits of Boston boys, emancipated from the restraint of six days, added to the general activity. Holiday and lecture-day were then synonymous terms. How wide apart are now the associations connected with each! It is long since the descendants of the Pilgrims looked upon a lecture as a holiday affair, and since the blessed anticipation of the pleasures of a holiday included the hearing of a lecture.

At twelve o'clock, immediately after the early dinner of that period, all hastened and crowded to the sanctuary for the refreshment of the Thursday Lecture. The praying Indians were already there, and had had places assigned them in front of the ministers; they were to be addressed as those who had refused to pay tribute to the sachem.

The first prayer had been made, and the singing of the hymn was nearly over, when a great bustle ensued at the

Digitized by Google

door. It was thrust wide open, and Cutshamakin, with his interpreter and his two wives following at a little distance, advanced, with haughty gesture and imperious step, and placed himself in an attitude of command before the ministers and people. Seats were offered him, but he waved his hand for the service to proceed, and remained standing erect and haughty, while his wives modestly bent their heads, as though impressed with awe and shame.

The audacity of the chief drew all eyes upon him; tall, erect, and haughty, with his splendid head-dress of eagle's feathers, his mantle of deer-skin that swept the ground, trimmed with gay fringes of colored beads, his tomahawk in his girdle, his bow and arrows in his hand, while upon his countenance could be seen the varying expression of scorn, contempt, and anger, changing to exultation and triumph as the interpreter repeated to him in a whisper the purport of the sermon upon that command of the Saviour to render unto Cæsar the things that belonged to Cæsar, the claim of the sachem to tribute being completely established.

The other offence seemed almost to find its apology in the presence of the two wives. The one, extremely youthful, the last chosen of the sachem, might have been the daughter of the chief, and if she had been bent on the conquest of the youths of the pale-faces, she could not have adorned herself with more coquetry. Her mantle, of fine deer-skin wrought in colors, was snowy white, her ear-rings and bracelets of silver, and the tablet, as our fathers called the ornament which she wore upon her breast, was gay with tinsel, and stones, and beads. She wore silver rings upon her well-formed ankles, and open buskins, that displayed their graceful shape.

The other wife was perhaps thirty, but the hours and days of heavy toil to which the Indian squaws were con-

Digitized by Google

demned had brought upon her a premature old age. She wore no ornament, and scarcely lifted her eyes to her husband's face; but she pointed, while tears streamed down her cheeks, to a young Indian boy and his sister who had silently followed her into the assembly, as though she would have said, "These are my jewels."

Here was a case that puzzled the ministers and teachers; and it seems that, though they were eloquent against the sin of polygamy, they could not come to any decision which wife should be put away; the judgment was therefore deferred to another time.

How singular does the whole transaction appear to us now, and how deeply is it tinctured with the spirit of the times! It seems as if a few hours of investigation of two or three sensible men might have settled the whole affair of paying tribute, and that only great ignorance of human nature could make our fathers believe that a sermon, however eloquent, could unlink the chain that bound an Indian to his wife. The ministers were accustomed to address the people at the Thursday Lecture upon those delicate questions of morality that did not come within the cognizance of the laws or the General Court, but were subject to the control of public opinion. This Thursday Lecture seemed to exercise the same kind of influence as that of the public press at the present day; but the poor Indian did not half understand, and could not submit himself to its control.

With reverence and humility, such as become us in speaking of Eliot, that faithful, self-devoted apostle, that zealous, truth-inspired evangelist, that martyr to an unfruitful, but holy cause, may we not suggest that the theology he taught these simple children of nature was incomprehensible to their minds, distasteful to their hearts? that the civilization he endeavoured to bring about was

Digitized by Google

disproportioned and in advance of their wants ? A perfect mixture with the pale-faces could alone have produced that *gradual* civilization that would have been permanent. They should have been induced to love their masters, and then they might have wished to be like them. But the whites were, except a few, too disdainful of them to perceive their true wants, or the value of the savage virtues, the simple religion, they already possessed.

There was also an immobility in the Indian character that made them averse to civilization. Like the Jews of old, they could not be moulded by others, they could not adopt strange customs. They remained ever attached to their wild life and their hunting-grounds; the moccason was dearer than the shoe, the blanket than the coat. The Indian could not confine his wants to the little inclosure around his wigwam, however fruitful it might be in corn and potatoes; his step was on the mountain-side, his path through the mountain torrent. His cabin gave him no room to breathe, — scarcely could he have breathed in a cathedral; the wide forest and the prairie, with the Great Spirit near him, made his dwelling-place. One by one they perish, like the leaves of the forest that are swept away by the autumn winds; melancholy shrouds them; they die of sadness, and are effaced from the earth by an inexorable destiny.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI.

"'T is winter's jubilee; this day
His stores their countless treasures yield;
See how the diamond-glances play,
In ceaseless blaze, from tree and field!
A shower of gems is strewed around, —
The flowers of winter rich and rare;
Rubies and sapphires deck the ground;
The topaz, emerald, all are there."

ANDREWS NORTON.

IN such amusements as I have described, or rather in such devout occupation, the autumn passed away. The gorgeous array of the autumn foliage had fallen to the ground, and the trees stood around the common and upon the heights of Roxbury and Dorchester in all the beauty of the intricate interlacing of their bare branches and twigs, clearly designed upon the amber of the evening sky. These closely-reefed trees possess a beauty of their own, that seems to bid defiance to any further changes of season; and yet a snow-storm arrays them in a fairy loveliness that for a moment surpasses their summer beauty. Naomi had watched with constantly increasing interest the changes of the autumn, from the first pale amber and vivid red of the maple-leaf to the rich and uniform brown tint of the forests, till all were swept away by November gales, and the sunbeams, freely admitted, checkered the

Digitized by Google

embroidered ground with light and shadow, and the deep blue harvest sky rested over all.

A snow-storm occurred in the beginning of winter, succeeded by rain and a sharp frost, and the next day the sun arose upon a world that had been turned as by enchantment into a frostwork of precious stones, of diamonds, and gems. How many pens have been employed to describe a scene like this! and all have failed as completely as though a mortal painter were to dip his brush in dew to paint the varying glories of sunrise. Shall I, then, presumptuously make the attempt? No. The transforming power of that invisible magician, Frost, must be seen; one must see to believe, that, like Aladdin's lamp, it can transform the most homely objects into the most precious and gorgeous. A pigsty becomes a fairy palace; an Indian wigwam, a huge coronet of diamonds; every twig of every tree is hung with a wreath of colored jewels; the fences, the bushes, become delicate frostwork of molten silver, hung with crystals polished beyond the art of man.

To those who had been long in the country this was no surprising nor exciting scene; but it was new to Naomi, and she was eager to observe this unique species of beauty. Early in the morning she engaged Ruth to accompany her in a walk across the isthmus, or Neck. Upon the surface of the snow there was a thin coating of transparent ice, glittering in the sunshine with myriads of brilliants, and sown thickly with larger diamonds. The air was sharp, but elastic, and the deep blue sky without a single cloud.

The first objects of interest to the pedestrians were the picturesque little tents of the smelt-fishers, made of a single blanket or rug thrown over crossed poles, merely to defend the fishers from the wind; and they promised

Digitized by Google

themselves to go again in the evening, when the fires would be kindled, that would transform these ragged blankets into tents of silver.

As they proceeded, they remarked objects no less homely, but made picturesque by the eye that has the power of discerning beauty. Huge sleds, loaded to an enormous height with the prostrate giants of the forest, approached slowly, seen at a great distance by the moist breath of the poor, laboring beasts, curling up in the keen morning air, and colored with rainbow hues. As they drew near, they saw the rime around their wide-distended nostrils, and the muzzles of the poor beasts hung with wreaths of brilliants. Each ponderous load was but a single magnificent tenant of the forest, brought down by the axe of those who first penetrated the untrodden solitudes with such a little instrument. There the splendid tree had counted, ah, how many centuries! Unharmed by wintry storms, by the lightning, the raging tempest, it had spread its wide, protecting arms to shelter the wild beast and the wilder man, and myriads of sentient beings had found life and protection in its branches. The squirrel had leaped from twig to twig; the little singing-birds had sheltered their nests under the green tent of its leaves; millions of creeping things had nestled and fed on its bark; innumerable ephemera had led the intricate dance through long, long summer days under its shadow; the wild deer had lain securely beneath its shelter; the shining, speckled snake had hid in the thick grass around its trunk; the timid rabit had sipped the morning dew upon its turfed roots; and now that little shining blade had laid its world of life, and its honors gathered for centuries there in lonely majesty, low in the dust.

It required science to heap up and nicely balance these ponderous loads of fuel. First, at the foundation was

Digitized by Google

laid the enormous trunk, cut into equal lengths and laid with care; then followed the wide-spread arms, also squared, and measured, and nicely adjusted; upon these were piled the lighter branches, shorn of their myriad twigs, which last were heaped high, and truly balanced, upon the top of all. Thus each load, with its guardian and its patient, much-enduring beasts, slowly plodding over the frozen road, carried comfort and cheerfulness to the firesides of our fathers, who in their early settlement found these noble forest-friends their best and truest.

As Ruth and Naomi advanced, they heard echoing all around the sturdy strokes of the woodman in different parts of the forest, and the familiar whistle that called back their straying dogs. How different from the whistle of the engine, or the throbbing of the rail-car! How changed the scene! Then a nearly unbroken forest shut in the horizon. A little clearing might then have been made in the woods near a running stream, with which they were so rich, and a mill-wheel placed over, which in summer dashed the limpid treasure of the rocks in sparkling drops of foam, but then was imprisoned by the frost-work of winter. All else was silent solitude. Now, — ah! it requires the pen of an actor in these busy scenes to describe their hurrying tumult, — the thronging of the thoroughfare where the wild beast then roamed, — the rushing of the almost incessant car where the serpent brooded. Where the wild vine and savage creeping plants wove an intricate netting upon the ground, is now a network of iron, and metal lines dissect the air where only the wild bird carolled and the thousand melodies of nature arose. Fruit-trees, the vintage of the south, the blushing fruits of the tropics, hang where the wild swamp threw up its rank vegetation; gorgeous flowers bloom where the poisonous weed flourished. Instead of the wild Indian is

Digitized by Google

the industrious laborer, the work of whose hardy muscles, the sweat of whose honest brow, has made the wilderness thus blossom. Woman, too, Christian woman, has had her part in the work of these two short centuries ; she has taught her children to love labor, and to love God ; she has gathered them around her knees where the poor Indian squaw left the frail ones to perish. Children are everywhere in our blessed land of Massachusetts the care of the state ; cherished and guarded also by humane and Christian love, gathering them into Sunday Schools, leading them by the tenderest love to the only example of true excellence. O, did they but know their privileges, — were they sensible of their blessed condition, — how would they strive to make it permanent, to transmit their blessings to future generations !

To return to our pedestrians. Next came herds of cows and oxen, driven into Boston, the former for winter quarters, the oxen perhaps for the market. They had been pastured during the summer upon the flats and hills of Muddy River, or Brookline, and were now plodding their way, each to its well-known manger in the corner of the well-filled barn. Our fathers were most humane and tender in their care of animals, and severely punished all cruelty towards them. Some of the cows were followed by their calves. Naomi and Ruth had passed the whole herd, when they found one little calf lagging far behind ; it had met with an accident ; one of its legs was broken, and the little cripple, with its utmost exertions, could not keep up with the herd. It was pitiable to see the distress of the poor mother, obliged to go on with the rest, but every moment turning back to aid her young calf, who at every fruitless leap rolled over in the snow ; the agony of the mother was inexpressible, and her full eye seemed swelled with tears, as she was driven on by the surly brute who had them in charge.

Digitized by Google

The scene was too affecting for Ruth's young nerves. Petted child as she was, she felt her power, and called to the driver to stop and take up the calf in his arms, or she would complain of him to her father. He answered surlily, that the cattle did not belong to her father, and that he had nothing to do with them. The two young girls held a consultation, and the indulged child determined to purchase the privilege of disposing of both cow and calf, knowing that her father, if he blamed, would soon forgive.

The driver was the owner of the two animals, or he would not have dared to use them so cruelly ; the price he asked was greatly too large for the united purses of Ruth and Naomi ; but as they had entered into the affair, they would not give it up, and Naomi gave the man an order on her step-father for the rest of the price. An old shed, that had been used to store the salt hay from the flats, sheltered the poor calf and its mother, most happy to lie down together till they could be sent for in the evening. Ruth's exultation was almost boundless, when she had placed the poor, limping calf by the side of its mother. Perhaps it is characteristic of the times, that the driver was the only sufferer. Mr. Aldersey was so satisfied to bring a delinquent to punishment, that he overlooked this act of temerity in his daughter. The man was obliged to content himself with only half the price he had demanded for the cow, and to submit to the disgrace of an hour in the stocks.

As Naomi and Ruth returned from their exciting walk, the glory of the morning was melting away in the meridian sun ; the southern side of tree and shrub was nearly bare of the glittering ornaments, presenting, if Naomi had been so disposed, a subject for moralizing reflections upon its short-lived splendor.

Digitized by Google

The ice had melted away, and the narrow, central stream of the river was flowing, like a winding and beautiful ribbon of indigo-blue, between the white, glittering marshes on either side.

A single canoe was floating down this stream, with an Indian standing erect in the prow, wielding a long pole to keep the boat from the ice on either side, while his wife sat in the stern. The picturesque and graceful form of the Indian, his flowing mantle and waving plumes, the ease and pliancy of his motion as he alternately bent forward, and then resumed, with added power, his erect and striking attitude, formed a beautiful living picture in the wide expanse of the snow-clad, wintry landscape.

I have lingered too long, perhaps, upon these peaceful scenes, unwilling to hurry into those of a darker, though more exciting interest; for the soul of my heroine was made for peace, and to pursue her gentle, unobtrusive way through the sheltered paths of life, revealing herself only, to adopt once more the well-used metaphor, by the fresher green and the lovelier flowers that followed her course.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII.

SPRING.

"She brought with her both fruits and flowers,
Matured in other, sunnier fields,
Where nature in her southern bowers
A glow of milder radiance yields." — SCHILLER.

THE winter had now passed away, with its wild storms, — its dark and its brilliant, its clear and frosty days, — its long nights of cold, white light, that seemed like summer days robbed of all heat and color. The stern and fervent Puritans of Boston went through the winter, as the summer, asking for and needing no relaxation. All amusements were frowned upon or forbidden; no private dancing was allowed, and if detected, was severely punished. Our good forefathers had never seriously considered the consequences of stopping up the spout of the teakettle.

In the winter, families drew closer around their huge and cheerful fireplaces, heaped full of glowing logs. Large settles on each side shut in the inmates, and formed a smaller apartment within the larger, where domestic occupations, the flax-wheel and the hand-loom, with family devotions, passed off the lingering hours of the wintry months. In the aristocratic families, among which Mr. Aldersey's was one of the most distinguished, the couch, more luxurious but less sheltered than the settle, held the

Digitized by Google

place of the modern sofa, and the great arm-chair was more honored than the luxurious *fauteuil*. The master of the family occupied this honored chair, and with the Bible before him, and every member of the family collected around, the servants occupying humble seats, the long winter evenings were spent in propounding and explaining the Scriptures, and closed with prayer.

To Naomi these quiet winter hours were never tedious. She possessed that repose of mind and character that was fed from within, and depending so little upon the outward for aliment, even during the never-ending instructions of her step-father, she appropriated only such little morsels for her own aliment that she never felt satiety. To Ruth, however, winter was intolerably dull, and she hailed the first melting and genial breeze that came to them from the sweet south with the delight of a child. Then the long, lingering spring, winter once more, and yet again, returning, leaving its foot-prints in the tender verdure of May, and with cold embrace, like the touch of the ice-spirit, shrivelling up the new-born blossom.

At length the fluctuating and inconstant weather of the capricious spring settled into the clear and transparent atmosphere of June. The wind blew steadily from the southwest, and the windows could all be left open, both day and night, giving free admittance to the air of the perfume-breathing orchard. The color of the tender, newly expanded foliage varied from the softest green of the aspen to the deep purple of the oak. Every wild brier and every trodden weed, every lowly creeping plant and every aspiring tree, spread out its delicate blossom, unobserved by man; but not less generously did it add its little perfume to the incense-breathing bosom of our mother earth. Beauty, too, was hung upon every branch and leaf, and the earth was covered with blossoms, the open eyes of beauty.

Digitized by Google

On the evening of the first of June, Faith and Naomi sat in the window-seat of the parlour, near which flourished the English white rose-tree, whose first blossom had opened its petals that very day. It recalled her home to Naomi, and she listened as though she could catch the harmonies of her English home in the sounds that met her ear in the hum of the evening; but they were all unlike the rural sounds of England. Ruth, still too young to relish serious conversation, had strolled out with companions of her own age. The birds, more numerous in Boston than at the present time, had begun their evening song, varied by the mysterious hymn of the frogs from the common, and the whistle of the cow-boys as they drove their charges home.

Naomi extended her arm, and plucked the rose that hung within her reach. "Ah!" she said, "how tenderly does this remind me of my childhood and of my dear mother! It was her favorite among the roses; I believe she had some association connecting it with the War of the Roses. It was to an ancestress of hers that those beautiful lines were addressed, —

'If this fair rose offend thy sight,
It in thy bosom wear;
'T will blush to find itself less white,
And turn Lancastrian there.'

My poor nurse Margaret was always dressing me up with white roses when I was a babe, from which she had carefully removed all the thorns, saying thus it should be all my life long; she would never let a thorn come near me."

"Poor Margaret!" said Faith; "she seems likely now to strew them in your path; but how shall we dispose of her? The weather will soon be intolerably warm, and I am afraid she will not be able to support the heat in that little low-roofed garret; her health will fail, I fear."

Digitized by Google

"I have been thinking of it," said Naomi. "Could we not remove her without observation to my step-father's little cottage at Muddy River, where she could be concealed through the hot weather. Sambo is already acquainted with her concealment. He would take her in the boat during the darkness of the evening, and Mr. Aldersey would know nothing of it."

"But," said Faith, "I fear Margaret will not consent to remain concealed much longer. Her affection for you is all that now restrains her from breaking forth from her concealment and proclaiming her new principles; her burning zeal seems to be gathering to a flame."

"Well," answered Naomi, "the last time I talked with her I felt that I had no right to restrain her from giving her testimony, if she can do it with moderation and without descending to the abuse of others. The pure spirit of truth is in her heart, and though perhaps there is mingled with it some ostentation, some desire to make herself conspicuous, I believe she has the true spirit of martyrdom for the truth; and it surprises me that she has consented to remain concealed so long; and, indeed, I know not whether I ought to consent that, to preserve me from annoyance, she should withhold her testimony to the truth."

Faith looked at Naomi with a degree of wonder and incredulity that brought a faint color to her cheek. She said only, — "You have incurred all the danger that you can incur by giving her shelter." Naomi sat there, calm and steadfast, after the expression of sentiments which, if Faith had not learnt to know and appreciate Naomi's pure, truthful, transparent character, would have curdled her blood and filled her with alarm and aversion.

At this moment of their conversation, they were startled by the distant roll of a drum, a sound which, like the

Digitized by Google

tocsin during the Revolution in France, filled every listener with consternation. The time had been purposely chosen when the heads of families were resting, the labors of the day over, each under his own roof, to break in upon the harmonies of the evening with the appalling voice of power, and the unwelcome associations connected with persecution.

The sharp and long-continued roll of the drum drew nearer. All hastened to their windows. The sinister procession, consisting of the drummer, the constable, and the town-clerk, followed by half a dozen boys, paused beneath the window of every householder, and read the terrible proclamation in ear-piercing tones. In some instances, the window was shut quickly down ; but those who listened heard, that, for harbouring, assisting, encouraging, sheltering, or comforting one of that accursed sect called Quakers, the offender for the first offence should be punished with the loss of an ear ; for the second, with whipping, and the tongue be bored through with a red-hot iron. Every word was distinctly heard by Naomi and Faith, and the dark procession passed on ; and, till late in the evening, the lugubrious sounds of the drum and the sharp voice of the clerk were heard publishing from house to house, and breaking upon the stillness of the summer's night with the iron tongue of threatened persecution.

At the first sound of this proclamation, Naomi and Faith, as they sat in the window, exchanged looks of alarm, and a slight degree of paleness overspread the features of the former. A sinister proclamation, like that which had just broken upon the peaceful summer evening, showing the unrelenting determination of the government, was enough of itself to disturb her serenity ; but Naomi had another cause for anxiety, and even terror, that touched herself most nearly.

Digitized by Google

A few weeks previous to this very evening, in one of those dark and tempestuous days that occur about the time of the vernal equinox, a woman had presented herself at the back door of Mr. Aldersey's house, and inquired for Naomi. She refused to disclose her name to Faith, who had received her, and indeed sought a degree of mystery and concealment, that, from her respectable appearance, did not excite in Faith's candid mind any suspicion connected with guilt or the necessity of caution.

When Naomi was called, she instantly recognized Margaret, the faithful servant of her mother, who had been, as we have previously mentioned, the nurse of her own childhood, and apparently the immediate instrument of Naomi's own change of views upon religion, — the cause, under Providence, of the peace that had ever since dwelt in her own mind. As we have before said, she had been left behind from motives of prudence, and through Mr. Aldersey's peremptory commands. Margaret had pined for her nursling, and urged on, as she thought, by longing affection for Naomi, under which true feeling, indeed, there lurked a burning zeal for martyrdom, she had taken passage for Barbadoes. The penalty was so severe for bringing Quakers to Boston, that no captain would venture to bring her from England. After a long and stormy voyage to Barbadoes, she had concealed the fact of her Quakerism, and had thus persuaded a captain to bring her from thence to Boston ; but during the voyage her burning zeal had betrayed her true character to the other passengers, and to the ship's company.

Naomi, with a gush of tender recollection of her mother and of her own childhood, held out her arms to the servant, and would have fallen on her breast, exclaiming, — " Margaret ! how came you here ? Why are you here ? "

Digitized by Google

Margaret instantly put her hand upon her lips. "Hush, Miss Naomi! for Heaven's sake speak low! Do not know me! I am pursued! They are searching the vessel, and taking the captain who brought us, myself, and some others, to jail. We are all hotly pursued, and I came only to beg shelter for one night, or till this hot pursuit be over. I inquired out your residence before we landed, and I shall never be suspected of seeking shelter under Mr. Aldersey's roof."

Faith, who stood by, had instantly penetrated the whole mystery. Margaret, she saw, was a Quaker. Naomi had often spoken of her faithful nurse to Faith; but, as she had not yet resolved to make a confidant even of her, with regard to her own religious views, she had not mentioned the circumstance of her being a zealous Quaker. Faith instantly saw the abyss, the extent of the danger in which Naomi was involving herself. Margaret was one of the accursed, come to throw a firebrand into that peaceful household, to taint with death the purest spot in the church. She steeled her heart, and, turning to Naomi, said, — "It is impossible that this woman can be sheltered here. She must not, for a single night, rest under this roof." And, turning to Margaret, — "You must take the consequences of your imprudence. You are a Quaker; and if you were my own sister, I should shut the door in your face!"

The woman looked at Naomi. At this moment there was a rush in the street, as if in pursuit of some fugitive. Naomi instinctively drew Margaret within the kitchen, and at the same instant shut and bolted the outward door. At that moment there was a loud knocking at the front door. Naomi hastened Margaret up the back stairs, and concealed her in a small closet, where articles of apparel were hanging thick; behind these, and almost in danger of suffoca-

Digitized by Google

tion, she locked her in. Fortunately, there had been no one in the kitchen at the time of this interruption except Faith, who was kneading bread. She had quietly resumed her work when Naomi returned, and said a few words to her in a low voice. The deed was done, and now the faithfulness and generosity of Faith's nature were enlisted in the concealment to which she had so reluctantly consented.

Naomi took up her knitting again in the parlour. All this passed so quickly, that old Sambo had only sufficient time to usher those who had been knocking at the front door into that apartment. Mr. Aldersey sat comfortably in his great arm-chair by the fireside ; two centuries later, the newspaper would have been before him ; but he now held in his hand the Rev. Mr. Norton's tractate against the Quakers, that bitter essay, for writing which he received a hundred acres of land from the General Court.

The constable, for such it was, and the captain of the ship, who had offered, upon condition of his own release, to discover the hiding-places of his passengers, abruptly declared the cause of their intrusion by saying that one of the women had been seen to run for refuge to and to enter the back premises of this house.

Mr. Aldersey laid down his book, and rose, with offended dignity. " He should have supposed," he said, " that, from his known character, — an elder of the church, also ; a magistrate, strict in the discharge of his duty ; a church-member, well known for his zeal and his hatred against *all* heretics, especially Quakers, — he should have expected to be exempt from such base suspicions and such intrusive visits."

The constable, however, insisted upon doing his duty, and Mr. Aldersey ordered Sambo to accompany them upon their search. Naomi had glided unobserved from

Digitized by Google

the parlour. As the constable entered the kitchen, Faith took her hands from the bread she was kneading, deliberately wiped off the flour, and with imperturbable calmness lighted another candle, ready to accompany them on their search.

After they had examined all the other chambers, — "This," said Naomi, who had joined them on the stairs, "this is my own room," as she opened the door of the chamber where Ruth, her sister, was apparently fast asleep in her own bed; "enter softly here, or you will awake and frighten my sister. It might produce serious consequences to awake her suddenly, with men and strangers in her room."

The constable drew back; he had that very evening left his own, only child asleep near its mother, when he was called out upon this duty, and the last image that remained upon his mind was that of its sleeping form. He drew back, and they closed the door of the chamber, within which was the closet where Margaret was concealed.

The constables returned to the kitchen and examined the servants, who had again collected. The servants knew nothing, for one had been absent feeding the beasts in the stable, another had gone to the cellar, and Sambo was with his master, setting out the table and the Bible for evening worship. Naomi, by her ingenuity, had saved Margaret. She had glided up stairs while the constable was talking with her step-father, and persuaded Ruth to put herself into bed and imitate sleep. By the happy coincidence of the constable's sleeping child, Margaret was undiscovered; and from that hour till this very evening Naomi had sheltered and concealed her. To Faith alone was this concealment known. Ruth suspected, but did not know, that Margaret was the tenant of a small garret, that was always kept locked; but upon Mr. Aldersey's

Digitized by Google

mind had never dawned the slightest shade of suspicion that his orthodox roof sheltered an accursed heretic and Quaker.

Partly from fear, and from illness that succeeded the fatigues of her voyage, and partly from gratitude and affection, that induced Margaret not to compromise her benefactress, they had succeeded in keeping her quiet; but the state of Naomi's mind, her sympathy with the belief, if not with the outward distinctions, of Quakerism, inevitably became known to Faith. Naomi would have been glad if Faith had learned it from her own spontaneous confession; but it was better so: before she learned it, she had become acquainted with the angelic purity and beauty of Naomi's character; "and if," said Faith, "Quakerism produces such fruits, better were it that the whole colony were Quakers."

Naomi and Faith did not leave Margaret to the solitude of her garret; although the state of exaltation in which she was, like the delirium of a person slightly insane, made her totally indifferent to the place in which she dwelt, yet they did not leave her alone. As soon as Ruth had retired for the night, they resorted to her little room. At such times, Naomi's pale complexion and the pure outline of her features were defined by the light of the fire, for they dared not take a candle, and this uncertain and varying play of light gave her the form and expression of an angel visitant; and as she sat between the two women, the one burning with heretical zeal, the other shuddering with all the horror and detestation of the times against the heresy, tolerating the heretic only from feelings of humanity, Naomi was indeed what she seemed, a mediating and reconciling spirit.

The conversation often reverted to the mother country, and to circumstances that occurred there. I have said

Digitized by Google

above, that Faith never suspected Naomi's Quaker principles, as there was nothing peculiar in the exterior to betray the secret fountain that fed and refreshed the roots from which sprang the fresh and lovely flowers of her every-day life. One evening, Margaret, led on by reminiscences of home, mentioned the meeting when they had been so much moved by the preaching of George Fox.

Naomi looked at Faith while she answered, — "Ah, yes! I never can forget what has changed the whole complexion of my character, and given peace to my soul."

Faith did not start, nor express any surprise, but she turned very pale, and, looking again at Naomi, she rose to leave the room.

"Stay, Faith," said Naomi; and, taking her gently around the waist, she drew her again into her chair. "You must know it sooner or later," she added; "I, too, am a Quaker, — a Quaker in heart and principle; but I do not feel compelled, as others do, to proclaim my faith to the world. I am but a babe and a humble learner in this pure belief, and do not yet feel it my privilege to encounter martyrdom."

Faith looked at Naomi, as though possessing herself completely of the meaning of her words, and repeated very slowly the words Naomi had used, pausing between every syllable: — "You are a Quaker in heart and principle, — you are a Quaker —— Ah, well! that cannot be an evil faith, — that cannot lead to evil that produces such fruits as I see in you."

Faith's plain good-sense and candid disposition had come exactly to the truth; she had struck the nail upon the head; illiterate, but true and simple-minded, she had discerned the truth, — that could not be bad in itself that

Digitized by Google

cherished and fed with its secret springs the beautiful riches, the lovely graces, of such a character as Naomi's. It was the abuse, the extravagance, the perversion of these pure principles, she thought, that did so much mischief.

"Well," said Margaret, her zeal beginning to kindle; "you see what are the fruits of pure Quakerism; you see them in Miss Naomi; will you not also inquire and be convinced, and join the company of the faithful."

"No," said Faith, and she shook her head; "I am content with my own church. It is good enough for me. I must be permitted to go to heaven in the old way. I believe it has done very well for every body since the days of the Apostle Paul. I think it quite unnecessary, to say the least, to give new names to old things; and, as far as I can see, Miss Naomi's faith produces as good works as Mr. Wilson's, or even our old minister's, whom I remember well, Mr. Cotton; there never was a holier saint; but I dare say he has met in heaven many that he never expected to welcome there."

"Yes," said Naomi, "the paths diverge, but they meet at the gate; and O, how many shall we there find with their beautiful robes, — the white robes of seraphs, — who have here sat in the dust and ashes of contempt; who have been turned from the gates of the church; whom the Pharisees have passed by, shaking their robes as they passed them lest they should have contracted the taint of heresy!"

Faith, thus admitted to the confidence of Naomi, felt a more tender, a more watchful interest in her. Humble as was her situation in the family, she had thoroughly penetrated the character of Mr. Aldersey. She knew that even the selfish hope of inheriting the fortune of Naomi would not restrain him from showing his bitter ani-

Digitized by Google

mosity, if the disgrace of heresy was brought upon his roof-tree. She felt from this moment a double guardianship of Naomi's reputation, and of her actual safety under the roof of her step-father.

It had required the utmost watchfulness, both from Faith and Naomi, to prevent Margaret, burning as she was with Quaker zeal, from lifting up her voice, even in Mr. Aldersey's family. She also had this evening heard the hollow thundering of that drum, and the murderous voice breaking in upon the quiet of the summer evening, to proclaim infamous penalties upon her benefactress, and she instantly resolved to leave the shelter of that roof. It cannot be denied, also, that there was something in the touch of that drum, in the proclamation of those ignominious penalties, that gave air to the struggling fire in her breast and kindled it to a flame. She believed it was the voice of God calling upon her to take her part in the persecution and martyrdom, that were beginning again with renewed bitterness. She secretly left the house that night, and joined a party of Quakers already in Boston.

Persecution now awoke with tenfold severity; and the irregularities and extravagances of the Quakers increased with the severity of the measures of the government. Every day some new punishment, some whipping, or some branding was the subject of conversation. It is well known that the female Quakers defied and provoked the utmost severity of the laws. They proclaimed their opinions in immodest garb, and in the public streets; they went into the meeting-houses in sackcloth, with ashes on their heads, and their faces painted with odious colors; they insulted the ministers, and defied the magistrates at the foot of the pillory and the scaffold. They even courted death. Mary Dyer, who had been twice banish-

Digitized by Google

ed from Boston, and once reprieved from the scaffold with the rope around her neck, had this very spring returned again to Boston, determined to brave the utmost penalty, to offer herself up a martyr to the cause.

The government would bear with her no longer ; the day of her execution was appointed. In the mean time Margaret, as soon as she was away from the guardianship of her benefactress, conducted in so imprudent a manner as to come under the severe penalty of the law, and was immediately arrested and placed with others in the Boston jail. Naomi's mind was filled with anxiety, not on her own account, for no one had dared to question her, and the opinions she kept locked in her own breast could not come under the cognizance of the civil tribunal, but she felt bound by tender ties to Margaret ; she could not abandon her, and she felt a presentiment that she should herself become involved in her fate.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII.

I WOULD here pause for a moment before describing that atrocious act that disgraces the annals of our early history, — the execution at the gallows of that aged, feeble, desolate old woman, whose gray head Nature herself, in a few short years, would have laid in the grave, — to recall all the circumstances that can possibly palliate, if not justify, the deed.

The Quakers at this time had become an intolerable, an unbearable affliction to our fathers. They had warned and threatened them, punished and banished, but all in vain. Where one was banished, ten returned in his place. Their insulting and blasphemous language was not the half that the ministers and magistrates had to bear with; the low order of Quakers that visited this country endeavoured by every mean and malicious tale, by every secret and unfair practice, to injure the fair fame and impair the usefulness of the ministers. They endeavoured to make divisions in the church and in families, infusing bitterness into the hearts of church-members, dividing children against their parents, and even severing the ties that bound together the wife and the husband. Their efforts all tended to the subversion of civil order, and to bring anarchy into the church and into the government of the country. We may also add, what no doubt was, to

Digitized by Google

our ancestors, a sufficient justification of their course, that they only followed the example of the mother country in their treatment of the Quakers. Till after the return of the second Charles, branding and mutilating was the practice of England, a practice whose fruit, indeed, had been like the apples of Sodom, ashes and bitterness. If the light of toleration had not dawned in England, how could it be expected to shine upon these western shores? Ah! that sun was far below the horizon; it can scarcely yet be said to have risen above the thick night of bigotry. We can hardly tell what would have been the result, if our fathers had loved religious liberty as well as they did civil emancipation, — if they had been so far before their age as to have tolerated a difference in religious opinions, or acted with the simple good-sense of Faith, and, looking beyond the fanatics, had observed the life of the purest among the Quakers. At this very time there were pure, noble-minded, sincere, and pious Quakers, even among those who came to these western shores.

As was mentioned in the last chapter, the execution of Mary Dyer had been appointed for the next day. It was Thursday, and an additional solemnity was given to the act by its taking place immediately before the Lecture. She had wantonly returned to brave martyrdom, to throw herself into the arms of the executioner, and the forbearance of our fathers could be no longer sustained. The proceedings of the court were summary indeed. Twenty-four hours were all that was allowed her! "Prepare yourself," said the governor; "for to-morrow morning at nine o'clock you die!" Neither her silvered head, nor the voices of her kneeling children, nor the eloquent petition of her husband, that seemed wrung from his heart with passionate tears, could move the court to relent at "her inconsiderate madness," nor allow "the wings of

Digitized by Google

mercy to soar above the balance of justice." It was necessary to strike terror into that ever-increasing and audacious sect; to show the Quakers that they could not breathe in New England.

The sun rose that June morning, like the sun of any other day, upon the waveless mirror of the bay, where every mast and spar of the shipping, every softly undulating outline or bold headland of the coast and islands, was rendered more beautifully soft, as it was seen reflected in the transparent water. The perfect calm of the water, and a light breath of wind from the east, but not enough to fill the sails, suspended a few fishing-vessels — motionless, resting doubled, the reflected one the more distinctly defined — upon the smooth and burnished mirror of the bay.

This sabbath of our little world, this silent hymn of nature, was soon to be broken by rude sounds, and the lovely beauty of God's creation profaned by the bleeding offering of man's passions. The solitudes of the New World had seen few such base and bloody deeds. The Indian, indeed, tortured and slew his enemies; but it was a noble sacrifice. He yielded to the promptings of a "great revenge"; he had the stern justice of the conqueror to excuse an act, which would have been inexorably fulfilled on him had he been conquered; but it was the white man and the follower of the martyr, — he who called himself a Christian, — that first insulted the virgin beauty of our New World with ignoble revenge, and, like Cain, slew his brother because the offerings upon their religious altars differed in quality and form.

Soon after sunrise the tranquillity of this lovely summer morning was broken by the drum, calling the officers and soldiers of the different companies together. Near the training-field, the sound of the carpenter's saw and axe

Digitized by Google

gave awful note that the hasty preparations were completing. Naomi, as she stood early at her window, overlooking the principal highway across the Neck, soon saw it covered with carts and horsemen, with pedestrians, and vehicles of every description then known in the New World. The freemen from the surrounding towns were hastening into Boston. They were for the most part staid, serious, and intellectual-looking men, in rather plain clothes, for the dress of the gentlemen of the city was richer than that of those of the country. The horsemen had their wives or daughters behind them, dressed in close-cut velvet hoods, fastened beneath the chin. This "French hood," so fashionable at this period, was cut very much in front like what has since been called the "Marie Stuart cap," and was now, by most of the Boston dames, worn without a veil. The Rev. Mr. Norton, as we have already mentioned, had lately preached against the abomination of veils, and the ladies had laid them aside. It seems strange to us that masks, also an article of ladies' attire, universally worn when they encountered the meridian sun of a summer's day, should have passed uncensured, while the innocent veil was anathematized by the guardians of private morals. From the universal picturesqueness of attire worn at this period, the groups upon the Neck presented little monotony of appearance, and here and there appeared a country demoiselle, masked and alone, on horseback, exulting in her gayer dress and independent position. These parties, as they entered the town, thronged to the lower part of the training-field, — extending then to the south part of Washington Street, — the spot of most absorbing interest.

The ferry-boats passed continually back and forth, freighted with people hastening to the spectacle. Charles River and the inner bay were also covered with innumer-

Digitized by Google

able boats, all freighted with people bearing the same general aspect of serious, reflective, and even stern expression. They gathered in knots, or passed silently through the streets to the training-field. There was no exultation, no joyous sound ; all wore stern and solemn faces, and spoke in low voices, while an expression of anxious care sat on every brow.

It is well known that the people did not all go with the ministers and the magistrates in their severe views, nor believe in the necessity of hanging the Quakers. They also trembled for their own liberties, when they considered the great assumption of power by the magistrates. The sentence for the execution of Mary Dyer had passed by one vote only. Women, the whole sex, had felt themselves deeply aggrieved by seeing numbers of that sex, young and old, stripped to the waist, and whipped through the public streets ; but the odium attached to the accursed sect was still great, and the influence of the ministers in full force. Endicott, the stern governor, was determined to rid the country of these children of the Evil One. Ah, how did the rigid old man deceive himself! The histories of the period give us room to say, that much of their heresy consisted in the disrespect of always remaining covered in his presence.

But the hour for the execution drew near. The training-field, then, as now, a grassy inclosure, surrounded with trees, was soon filled with a dense crowd. The beautiful slopes of Beacon Hill were covered with the lighter and more varied drapery of women and children. Immediately around the scaffold was a cleared inclosure, where the ministers and magistrates were to take their places. Now the drums were heard and the measured tread of soldiers, and a throng of people appeared, headed by the governor and his halberdiers, with the ministers

Digitized by Google

of a compassionate and peace-loving religion, — all this array of terror to conduct a feeble, gray-headed woman to expiate the sin of thinking for herself!

Silence was proclaimed; and now the Rev. Mr. Norton's deep voice broke upon the hushed attention with the words of the psalm: —

> "He that in heaven sits shall laugh,
> The Lord shall scorn them all;
> Then shall he speak to them in wrath,
> In rage he vex them shall."

Immediately after the psalm, which sounded far over, and was echoed back by, the hills, the wan and melancholy face of Wilson was seen to ascend the scaffold. He had passed through many and deep domestic sorrows, — had borne the death of his accomplished son, that broke the heart of the too tender mother, the loss of both his daughters, and of many lovely grandchildren; these sorrows had worn deep traces upon the man, but they had not subdued the stern, unrelenting Puritan. The heart of the man was melting and full of love, but the soul of the Calvinist was fierce and bitter. Such was the reverence in which Mr. Wilson was held, that throughout that vast multitude not a whisper or a sound was heard during an hour that he held them in breathless attention, reminding them of the judgment of God upon Korah. "Get you up from this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." The parallel between the rebellion of Korah against Moses and Aaron, and that of the Quakers against the church, was drawn with so much energy, with such an overpowering eloquence, that the excited people were ready to rush upon the scaffold and take his office out of the hands of the executioner, and tear the victim to pieces.

* * * * *

Digitized by Google

I draw a veil over the rest of the transactions of that unhappy day, when the sweet June air upon Boston common was tainted by the expiring breath of an aged woman, a martyr to religious opinions. The sun had reached the meridian when the crowds began to disperse and the people to seek their homes. The little town was full of strangers and visitors, drawn from every part of the country to witness the strange but exciting scene. The enthusiasm and tone of fervor were kept up to the highest point of exaltation by the Thursday Lecture, that followed immediately after the execution. The ministers embraced the occasion to excite the lukewarm, to reconcile the disaffected, and to confirm the zealous and the persecuting in the belief that they were doing God service. Their prayers were more fervent than usual; they thanked God from the bottom of their devout hearts for ridding them of the evil-doer, for silencing the tongue of the profane, and cutting off those who would scatter blasphemies and heresies through the land.

Thus did they harden and deceive their own consciences.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIV.

"All great desires that God hath given
Are prophecies of powers,
But genius, though the gift of Heaven,
Demands laborious hours."

In order to connect the different characters that take their humble part in our story, we must go back some ten years, and to a lonely farm-house that stood somewhere between the rocky heights of Roxbury and the meadows of Muddy River. This farm had been allotted to one of the early settlers, a yeoman from the mother country, who had labored hard to bring it into the high cultivation that had so charmed his eyes and cheered his labors upon his father's farm at home. But the sterile soil, the rocky nature of the ground, the long and severe frosts of the winters, and the fact that the husbandry of England was not wholly adapted to the difference of our soil and climate, — a truth that our fathers were slow to learn, — had caused him to go every year more and more behindhand, and had drawn many furrows in his honest and expanded brow.

It was the closing in of the evening in the latter part of December, — a cold and dark evening, for there had been a heavy fall of snow, and the trees were loaded and bent with this beautiful white frosting of winter ; the branches

Digitized by Google

of the hemlocks, bowed into graceful and waving forms by the weight of the incumbent snow, looked in the dusky light like bunches of enormous plumes, and might have served for the gigantic helmet of the castle of Otranto. The farm-house, an unusual circumstance, stood retired from the road, and a slightly trodden path upon the deep snow led up to its door-step.

The evening was closing in ; the cattle and domestic animals had been housed and fed ; the cows had yielded their evening repast, the fowls all roosted beneath a shed as near the house as they could find shelter, crowding themselves together beneath the friendly protection of man. The human inmates of this farm-house were collected together in the kitchen, where a large fire burned brightly in the huge chimney-place. The farmer himself, whose open and healthy countenance began to be shadowed over with deep lines of care, sat by a solitary candle, with papers before him, and seemed deeply involved in the intricacies of calculations of gain and loss. His wife, a woman of a mild and saintly countenance, sat nearer the chimney, spinning fine thread of flax upon a small foot-wheel. A healthy young girl, about fifteen years old, with the fair complexion and open and ruddy countenance of her father, was busy with domestic cares, clearing away the supper-table and arranging every thing neatly in the apartment.

These were not all the inmates of this quiet, though spacious and well-arranged room, — for it served the purposes of kitchen and parlour. It was the room, also, for all domestic farm-work, and a large moreen curtain hanging in front of a turned-up bedstead, showed that it could be used when needed as a sleeping apartment. Hanging shelves were suspended from the bare rafters, upon which rested the produce of a former dairy, when the farmer

Digitized by Google

was richer and his wife more robust. Large cheeses showed the industry of the wife, and the generous return the cows had made. Sheaves of corn and flitches of bacon were also suspended around the apartment. The immense fire-place and hearth, with the high-backed settles on each side, portioned off that inner side of the room as the more domestic and private sanctuary of the family.

There was another inmate. Near his mother's chair and under the shadow of the huge fire-place, so that the light of the pine fire fell upon the pages of his book, reclined, in what seemed an uneasy posture, a boy of eleven years, whose attention was so entirely fixed upon the book he was reading, that the supper had been on the table, partaken of by the others, and finished, while he had not heeded the various calls he had received to join the meal; till at last his sister kindly placed his supper upon the settle that stood near, and screened him from observation, till she had induced him to swallow that which his mother would not allow him wholly to neglect. Then he resumed his uneasy position, kneeling, with his head bent over the book, so that his hair fell over and completely concealed his countenance.

The supper had now been wholly dismissed, the hearth swept, and additional pine knots heightened the cheerful light of the room. The daughter of the family placed the Bible and psalm-book before her father, and the farm-servants, two sturdy and staid young Puritans, were summoned from the outer shed, where the patient cow stood to be relieved of her fragrant and delicious burden, when a slight knock was heard at the door, and, without waiting for a bidding, the latch was instantly lifted.

The person who entered was welcomed with deep reverence, but with no loud demonstrations of joy. His

Digitized by Google

face was nearly concealed by a broad-brimmed, flapping hat. He was slender and thin, with deep-sunk and piercing eyes, a complexion rather brown than pale, but worn and attenuated, as though exhausted with severe labors and midnight studies.

Mr. Eliot, the apostle of the Indians, had walked from his residence in Roxbury to this remote farm-house, standing, however, within the limits of his parish ; but he had come upon a benevolent errand, a message of hope, that gave to his countenance an expression of angelic goodness.

He was immediately relieved of his heavy overcoat, bound around his waist with a leathern belt, and when his hat was thrown aside, his hair, cut short around his neck, presented a striking contrast to the fashion of the period. Mr. Eliot's well-known aversion to the fashion of the day was strikingly illustrated by his own example. After the first greetings were over, the great arm-chair was drawn towards the exhilarating blaze of the fire, and the farmer, pointing to the Bible, invited Mr. Eliot to lead the devotions of the evening. It is well known how fervent, yet how familiar, were the prayers of this eminent apostle ; that he was gifted with that extraordinary eloquence which raised the soul above the earth and placed it at the gate of heaven ; and yet the occupations and cares of earth were not left behind, but elevated and sanctified. I have quoted what was said of him by a contemporary, that his lips were like the box of precious ointment opened by Mary, — they shed a grateful odor over the common affairs of life. From his prayer an attentive listener might have learned the object of his visit, which concerned the youth, who sat bent over his book with such profound attention that he had not observed the entrance of Mr. Eliot, and had only laid his book aside at prayers

Digitized by Google

by a command from his mother. But when Mr. Eliot, speaking to his father in a low voice, mentioned his desire to take the boy under his own instruction, and fit him to enter college, he raised and turned towards him a countenance animated with hope and radiant with intelligence. Perceiving that he was heard, Mr. Eliot spoke aloud; he said he had observed the quickness, the diligence, and progress of the boy at the common school, and it would be opposing the leading of Providence to let him languish without instruction. If God had distinguished him, as he believed, with gifts, it would be a reproach to them not to honor those whom God had honored. He came to propose to take the boy into his own family, and to complete his preparation for college.

This proposal was received with various but strong emotions by the different members of the family. The tender mother folded her hands, as though in thankfulness, and looked up with devout gratitude. The seriousness of the father's face deepened, and the furrows of his forehead contracted almost to a frown. The sister drew near her brother and sat down on the corner of the settle, to protect him, as though he were immediately to be taken from them. But the boy himself, his beautiful countenance flushed with joy, threw back the curls that shaded his face, and fixed his eyes upon Mr. Eliot, the angel of good to him; then, observing the ominous silence of his parents, he augured, from the little alacrity with which they received the proposal, a disappointment of his hopes, and he turned away again, and burst into tears. The good, he felt, was too great for him to hope for; the expense would be too enormous for his parents to bear, and the momentary exhilaration of hope died away within his breast in bitter disappointment.

The father gratefully, but with decided independence,

Digitized by Google

declined the proposal of the reverend gentleman. An imperative reason was, that he could not afford to spare his son's labors from the farm. None of his family, he said, had been scholars or ministers; they had been of Adam's profession, tillers of the ground; their hands were hardened to the ploughtail, and could scarcely bend to the pen; and, thank God! he was content to have his only son follow the honest calling of his father; and besides, his own opinion was, that a pious soul could be as near to God in the field, under the open sky, as if he was lifted up in the pulpit, praying under the sounding-board of the meeting-house.

The mother had hitherto kept silence, although it was apparent that she was deeply moved. At length she said, meekly, — "He is our youngest, the last born of many sons, who are waiting for us beyond the Jordan, in the promised land, — our Benjamin! In my prayers I have consecrated him to the service of God, but it would be beyond our deserts, and beyond my hopes, to see him a servant of the church, a minister of the Gospel."

"But," said Mr. Eliot, turning to the father, "he is not strong enough for the labors of the field; a hardy hand that you could hire would do three times the work of that boy; his frame is fragile, his body as well as mind too tender for hard work; he would break down under the ploughshare." And Mr. Eliot soon drew from the father the real cause of his opposition; which was the fear of pecuniary disability to meet the expense; they had no money; they lived without luxuries, upon the produce of the farm, and the wife and daughter spun and wove all the articles of their clothing.

"Is money all that is needed?" said the other. "Ah! how much easier is it to find money than the gifts and graces," he added, in a low voice, "that boy will bring to the service of the church!"

Digitized by Google

The reverend gentleman that afternoon had called upon the treasurer and received his half-year's salary, and at that moment it was tied in his pocket-handkerchief. He took it from his pocket, intending to present the boy with two or three crowns; but, after trying for a long time at the knot, he could not loosen it. "Ah!" said he, "God means you should have it all"; and he threw the handkerchief into the lap of the mother.*

She raised her eyes, overflowing with tears, to his face; but the independent father stepped forward, and, taking the money instantly from her hands, returned it to Mr. Eliot.

"Take it as a loan, I beseech you," said Mr. Eliot; "hire another hand for your farm, and let that boy come to me. He shall repay me tenfold when he is settled in God's vineyard."

The tender and pious mother would fain have told of answered prayers, — that, like the mother of Samuel, she had devoted her son from his birth to the service of God, — that, bereft of all her other sons, she had prayed for this one, that she might give him back again, — of his early docility, and how she had fed his infant mind with stories of Joseph and David, of Jesus and of John, so that from his birth he had been nourished upon the milk of the word; but Mr. Eliot hastened away, to avoid a possibility of the return of the money, and to spare the mother all expression of gratitude. The farmer followed him out of the door, and said, — "I receive that money, reverend Sir, only as a loan, which I shall faithfully appropriate, and by the strictest economy will soon discharge the debt."

"My friend," said Mr. Eliot, "do not be uneasy; the

* An authentic incident.

Digitized by Google

boy will repay me, not in silver coin, but in treasures I prize more highly. I shall not miss the money; I am well provided. If I had not left it here, the knot would have been just as hard to untie at the next house I entered. Your wife may return the handkerchief to Mrs. Eliot. I left it by accident here, you know. Good night!"

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XV.

THE courteous reader is requested to return with us, eight or nine years later, to the farm-house that had been the scene of the transaction related in the last chapter. It was then December, and winter had shrouded the scene in a uniform gloom ; it is now July, and the farm is on the southern or sunny side of the peninsula of Boston. At this time there was not that difference between the northern and southern aspects of the surrounding country that there is at the present day. Chelsea, Mystic, and Medford were then highly cultivated as farms, and not wholly stripped of their noble forests, as we see them now. We are happy to say, that cultivation and tasteful floriculture are beginning to make the northern side of Boston the garden that it was in the early settlement of the country. The town of Roxbury possessed beautiful farms, but beyond that, Brookline, then called Muddy River, deserved not the appellation of the pleasure-garden of Norfolk, although its wild beauties far surpassed those which the hand of man has given it as a dowry. It was principally used for grazing cattle, for which its meadows and sheltered nooks of rich pasturage were particularly adapted. At this time there were a few houses at what was afterwards known as the Punch-Bowl village, and a

Digitized by Google

road from thence to Cambridge; but the winding lanes leading into the beautiful, secluded dells, tapestried so richly with wild vines and all the treasures of Flora, were then undiscovered.

At the time of our tale, in 1660, upon the road leading through Roxbury to Dedham, there stood a rude stone, upon which was marked, in still ruder letters, "To Boston 5 miles." A few rods before reaching this milestone, a cart-path ran off upon the right hand, which, if the traveller or pedestrian pursued for about a mile, brought him to a lovely sheet of water, set like a precious gem within a frame of gently swelling land. Upon two sides the hills rose to a moderate height, and were clothed to the top with noble hemlocks, but fringed near the border of the lake with the lighter foliage of aspens and weeping birches, that hung their pensile branches in the water. The perfect beauty and transparency of this lovely mirror were marvellous to the eye. The solitude of the spot made it the favorite haunt of every spring and summer bird. Here were combined all the softer harmonies of nature, — the low voice of the wind in the summer foliage, and its dirge-like tone as it vibrated in the branches of the hemlock. Here were the blackbird's tender whistle, and the shriller song of the golden robin, and the joyous carol of the bobolink, with the murmur of a fresh, sparkling brook that fed the lake, and which entered one side with so much force as to send the little waves rippling with a silver sound upon the sandy beach of a little peninsula that broke the uniformity of its oval shape.

The path that turned off at the mile-stone stopped at the brook, where there was a watering-place for cattle; but another path turned off at the brook through a thicket of alder-bushes, and, pursuing the margin of the brook, ascended a rising ground of cultivated fields, some acres

Digitized by Google

in extent. Here, in this secluded spot, stood the farm-house that Mr. Eliot visited on that winter's evening, when the blessing of his presence and his readily proffered aid diffused a joy that had not yet faded away. The aspect of every thing about was much changed since then. Now, the lovely verdure of the fields rose in gentle swells to the very door-step, cleared of all except a few trees near the house, that gave dignity to the humble roof. Behind the house the ground rose in irregular and wooded heights, interspersed with masses of rock piled high upon each other, fringed in all their fissures with delicate, drooping, and various-colored shrubs. The brook leaped from height to height, fringing its path with a deeper green, and, as it reached the meadow, spread into a winding, tranquil stream, that flowed peacefully on to the lake. All around this meadow-farm was the unbroken forest, the wild and wooded hill behind, and the little lake in front.

The time of which we write was the early hay-harvest; the scythe had done its work, and the fragrant hay was lying thickly all over the field. Every thing had prospered with Mr. Walton since he accepted Mr. Eliot's money as a loan. A blessing had entered with the good man's gold. The house was humble, but every thing was in the neatest order. The waving elms seemed to give a dignity to the lowly roof, and graciously to shelter a barn and inclosure on the east side, where the cows stood and filled the air with their fragrant breath.

The sun had now descended beneath the wooded height, and threw the whole scene in deep shadow. It was a lovely July evening. A young woman with a milk-pail came from the eastern door of the farm-house, where there was a small porch furnished with wooden seats, but lingered to speak to a youth who sat upon one of the benches, his eyes fixed upon the lake, now reflecting in

Digitized by Google

its waveless calm all the rich and changing colors of the western sky, that were hidden by the cliff from his view.

It is the same youth we have seen before at the farmer's fireside ; but by the noiseless flight of years the youth has become a serious man. The color of his flaxen locks has deepened to dark chestnut, clustering around a brown but richly colored complexion. The liquid and spiritual eye that charmed Mr. Eliot has not changed, but deepened, in its expression ; and together with the gathered thought upon the brow there is mingled a sadness that attracts one to look into its depths, where are centred tears gathered from the heart. The boy had indeed wept, for before he had been one year in college he lost the tender mother to whom he owed so much.

He had pursued his studies with enthusiasm ; had repaid in a tenfold degree, with hope and expectation, the Rev. Mr. Eliot's loan. As I have before said, Mr. Walton's improved husbandry and the blessing that seemed to follow all his labors had enabled him to repay the money ; but Mr. Eliot, although obliged, as he said, to receive back the dross, which he soon gave away again, looked only to spiritual gifts and graces for his reward.

During the last year of Herbert's college life, which was now drawing to a close, without any apparent cause he seemed to lose all his buoyant vivacity ; care sat upon his youthful brow ; he had suddenly accumulated upon himself the thoughtfulness of years. His friends believed his ambition was deeply engaged, and that it was anxiety lest he should disappoint himself and others at the approaching Commencement which clouded his brow.

" He drives his plough too deep into the soil," said his father ; " his soul is all furrowed by the cares that belong only to philosophers and aged men. Ah ! it would have been better if he had been content with the

Digitized by Google

plough his father taught him to hold, and have left the sloughs of metaphysics to older heads."

"I do not think it is that," said the sister, who was five years older than Herbert, and watched over him with the solicitude of a mother; "I have never heard him say so, but he feels a disinclination to the profession to which he is destined. From the cradle our mother consecrated him to the church, and Mr. Eliot has riveted upon his conscience the duty of giving himself to the ministry. He loved it at first; but now he associates with the ministry the persecution of heretics, the branding and hanging of Quakers, all which his generous soul abhors."

"Ah!" said the old farmer with a sigh, "man arranges, but God disposes."

This conversation between the father and daughter occurred a few days before this evening, when Herbert was at home previous to the annual Commencement, which was to take place in a few weeks. Herbert had received the highest honor in the gift of the government, in acknowledgment of his diligence and scholarship. The Valedictory was then the highest part, and had been assigned to him.

"I shall disappoint every one," Herbert said to his sister, as she lingered a moment by him with the milk-pail in her hand; "and what would my father say, if I were to resolve never to mount the pulpit-stairs?"

"He will not be so deeply grieved as would have been our mother," said his sister.

"No, thank God! her heart will never be wrung by the ingratitude of her son," he said.

"Do not call your scruples by so harsh a name," said his sister. "Your doubts, whatever they arise from," she added soothingly, "are involuntary."

Herbert was suffering under the painful consciousness

Digitized by Google

that he had made a mistake. He had believed himself, and had suffered his friends to believe, and his education had been carried on with the conviction, that he was to fill the sacred office. But as he learned more of the theology of the period, and felt the persecuting spirit of the church, his whole soul revolted from ever belonging to that body. His nature was genial and easily excited to enthusiasm; his soul was full of a natural piety, and he now feared he had mistaken the glow of youthful feeling, and the ardor he felt for all pursuits connected with that learned profession, as a decided call and predilection for the profession itself. He resolved in his own mind, without asking advice of any one, to give some intimation of his change of feeling in the address assigned to him on Commencement day.

Herbert sat upon the settle, sunk deeply in thought, and in the consideration of means to extricate himself from the dilemma in which his conscientiousness had involved him, till the beautiful lights of evening, as they faded in the western horizon, faded also in that calm mirror which seemed placed there on purpose to reflect them. One by one the stars came out, and were seen in the depths of the lake more brilliant, more tangible as it were, than in the heavens. The solemn psalmody of nature began, — those mysterious and incomprehensible sounds of the breathing, but inanimate nature, that fill the soul with sympathy, and at the same moment with awe.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVI.

"Life is before ye!
Gird up your souls within you to the deed,
Angels and fellow-spirits bid ye speed!"

FANNY KEMBLE BUTLER.

IN the middle of the burning heat of summer occurred a festival that deeply interested our fathers. It was the annual Commencement at Cambridge. The College was yet in its infancy, — an infancy cruelly neglected by its parent, the State. It was indebted to strangers, and to the noble province of New Hampshire, for "shielding its looped and windowed" poverty. Its building, although only a quarter of a century old, was already dilapidated; its officers suffering from poverty; its commons poor and scanty. Yet here were gathered the spiritual riches of the people, the hopes of the church, — outward poverty, with intellectual riches, — ardent and generous youths, submitting to temporal hardships, devoting themselves to an ascetic life, for the sake of spiritual wealth.

The exercises of Commencement were principally religious, but they were not the less attended and listened to by all the *élite* of Boston and the surrounding country. Commencement was not, indeed, then, as it became in the next century, an occasion for the ostentatious display

Digitized by Google

of gayety and fashion, prepared for weeks beforehand, and remembered as the *one* great festival of the year; but it was, among the few holidays that our fathers permitted themselves to enjoy, that one most filled with pride and hope.

Mr. Aldersey's family rose early on Commencement day, and prepared for an excursion in which the whole day would be consumed, — the forenoon being occupied by the graduates, the afternoon by the masters of arts. Ruth had been permitted, for the first time, to partake of the pleasures of a festival, certainly more suited to old theologians than to young girls. As they walked down to the boat, their company consisting of Mr. Aldersey and his two daughters, with Sambo as an attendant, the dew that hung thick upon the western side of Beacon Hill diffused a delicious coolness through the air, and a grateful perfume from the shrubs that grew profusely upon that side, nearly covering the whole descent with alder, the low blueberry, the wax-like arbutus, and trailing blackberry, the rose-colored spirea, the sweet-scented clethra, the various species of asclepias, while in the little rivulets that ran at the foot of the hill the cardinal-flower added a rich fringe of scarlet.

It was midsummer; every tree, shrub, and flower had attained its perfection of beauty and finish, its highest point of development; the fields of wheat along the river were ripe for the sickle; the grass that had not already yielded to the scythe nodded with heavy, ripened head; the clover emitted its last faint fragrance, as it hung its full and sleepy blossom. The Indian corn alone waved its glossy and polished blade, rejoicing in a tropical heat. The trees had attained their deepest green; the next change must be decay. One could but look with a feeling of melancholy upon this full perfection that could not

Digitized by Google

be surpassed, and ask, Was it in the moral as in the physical world? When man had done his work and ripened the fruit of his endeavour, must he also decay? When beauty is perfect, must it fall into dust? Thank God for the answer! — Another spring will again surpass all this beauty, and for the soul of man there is a perpetual spring.

The party had taken boat early, on account of the morning tide, and the shadows of tree and shrub lay motionless upon the hill-side before the burning sun had drank up the dew. The blue and placid water that bore their boat, and the wooded scenery of the shore they were approaching, lay in serenest repose, as though offering their fresh and virgin beauty to the burning rays of this fierce, relentless sun of summer. They landed, crossed the principal street, and came upon the plain where was situated the rather spacious, although unfinished, college hall. A large number of persons were already collected upon the plain. Our fathers did not forbid on this occasion the sale of cakes and ale, and such refreshments as weary sojourners for a long summer day might need.

They had not waited long, when the sound of drum and fife announced the approach of the governor, escorted by his halberdiers and guards. They entered the south porch of the college, consisting then of one poor building of two stories, whose only embellishment was a walk shaded by noble trees. This college hall, like all the buildings of the period, belonged, if it could be said to have any order, to the Elizabethan style of architecture. It had a dark and sinister aspect. The first story, projecting far over the ground-floor, threw the latter into deep shadow, and the small diamond-paned and leaded windows added to the gloom, rather than enlightened the rooms within. The roof on all sides was covered with gables or projecting an-

Digitized by Google

gles, each containing one small window of leaded panes to enlighten the dormitories of students and fellows. This building contained the kitchens, a dining-hall, the small and meagre library, and dormitories for the tutors and, as yet, not numerous students. Those who could not find room in the hall were lodged in the neighbouring houses; but no student was allowed to take a meal in other than the college buttery.*

A procession was soon formed; the undergraduates, or college youths, generous, spirited, but rash and impulsive, then, as now, the hope of the country, in their gowns, bareheaded, came first, followed by the masters of arts, a little more mature in appearance, also bareheaded; the president and fellows, in their square caps; then the governor with his guards; the clergy, a numerous body of black cassocks, following the somewhat brilliant cortege of the governor. It must be remembered, that much more attention was given to costume at that period than at the present day; the dresses of all classes were much more picturesque, and what was wanting in numbers was made up in form.

"The beauty and fashion" of the neighbouring city (as is the phrase at the present day) were already collected beneath the bare rafters of the primitive meeting-house. Chivalry, or gallantry to the other sex, was not the characteristic of our Puritan fathers; the body of the house, that is, all the seats upon the floor, and the front seats of the gallery, were reserved for the procession; the ladies found seats as they best could around the walls, where their gay dresses and unveiled faces were thrown quite into the shade by the great body of dark-draperied men.

The exercises of Commencement day were almost wholly religious. The venerable President Chauncy, that

* Quincy's History of Harvard College.

Digitized by Google

much-suffering man, bowed down with age, illness, and privations, after an opening prayer, addressed the governor and the legislature in Latin, humbly pleading the claims of the College, and humbly expressing unmerited gratitude for their hard-wrung and niggardly aid. Then came the performances of the graduating class, in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. The last oration, however, the Valedictory of the class, was in "lingua vernacula," the mother English.

A lively interest had been excited for the youth who was to close the morning exercises. The circumstances of his early neglect and his later intelligence had become known, as well as the accident by which he became a *protégé* of the reverend apostle of the Indians. His brilliant talents were spoken of, his persevering industry commended, and one expected to see a mature man, almost a gray-beard, as much in advance of the class in age as in reputation. When, therefore, the youth of the farm-house stepped upon the stage in front of the pulpit, the strange union of deep intelligence and almost childlike beauty, a figure of extreme youthfulness and a countenance inspired by genius, caused a silence of lively and profound attention. The liquid hazel of his eyes flashed from their depths a thoughtful and radiant light. But the most attractive charm of the peculiar impression he made upon the audience was the entire unconsciousness of any superiority in himself, — the simplicity and even timidity with which he stood before them, "serene in youthful beauty," and eloquent with nature and deep-felt truth.

Our New England fathers at that time yielded deep reverence but to one source of inspiration, one fountain of truth; the faith that inspired them and the armour that protected them were found between the two covers of the Bible. That elder scripture that was all around them, in the boundless forest, and in the old, mysterious ocean,

Digitized by Google

— above them, in countless worlds of light, — served to make no profound impression on souls trained in the old doctrinal theology. The Bible was all to them. When, therefore, this young disciple, with the timid blushes of youthful inexperience, stood before them and spoke of truths drawn from his own consciousness, and illustrated by reference to nature and the wonderful works of God, the fathers looked grave, and the more strictly orthodox frowned. Yet they could not withhold their attention from his inspired eye and eloquent lip, when he spoke of the sufficiency of the voice of God in the soul ; of the immediate communion of God with the human soul, without the need of the intervention of human councils or creeds of man's devising.

The ladies, indeed, especially the young, were not withheld from admiration by the fear of theological heresies ; they regarded him with enraptured attention, and gave themselves generously up to the enthusiasm his youthful beauty and fervid eloquence inspired.

He spoke directly to the consciousness of Naomi. Every throb of her heart answered to the living words as they flowed from his lips. Her eyes were fixed upon his, and her usually fair cheek had become pale with emotion, and a tear trembled on her eyelid. She and her sister sat at the extremest distance of the house, the sparkling and blooming countenance of Ruth forming a striking contrast with her serene and thoughtful face.

Herbert had seen no ladies except his sister and his mother ; he had often dreamed of angels, but he was ignorant that such living faces as Naomi's ever existed. I do not speak of her beauty, but of the soul of her expression. Towards the close of his oration his eye fell upon the group, and met that fair, serene, and deeply thoughtful gaze fixed upon himself. The effect was in-

Digitized by Google

stantaneous and electrical; his heart seemed to pause from its beating, a deep crimson overspread his countenance; he trembled, and lost the thread of his oration. Instantly he rallied himself, and the audience supposed that his memory had for a moment failed. Herbert dared not look towards that group again, but in that one glance was revealed to him the spirit of beauty that had haunted him from his infancy, — that which he had sighed for in vain, and had never hoped to meet, — his own ideal was revealed in a living form, an angel's face. That which within him he had loved and cherished, and unconsciously had thought a part of himself, had taken the form of beauty and dwelt without him, distant, perhaps, and never again to meet his mortal eye. Who was she? from whence did she come? where was her abode? were questions that passed quick as thought through his mind. There was no time to obtain an answer. Fortunately for himself, he had pronounced the last words of his discourse. There were no plaudits on these occasions, as the character of the performances in these early days was too strictly religious. At the instant he finished, his eye sought again that beautiful and serene countenance, but by the general movement of the audience Naomi was hidden from his view.

In a peculiar state of the nerves, as soon as the eyes are closed, a far-off and luminous star appears as the focus of surrounding darkness. Herbert thought that if that face never met his gaze again, it would remain, like a beautiful star, for ever the centre to which his memory would turn. He was detained till the audience were dismissed, and then he followed instantly the retreating groups. One thought only influenced his quick and excited motions as he rushed through the crowds; congratulations, delicately implied dissent, concealed irony re-

Digitized by Google

garding his performance, all were disregarded ; his sole object was to overtake that beautiful countenance ; disappointment succeeded, for he saw only the robes of the sisters as the door of a house was closed upon their retreating forms. " In the afternoon," he said to himself, " at the performances of the masters of arts, I shall have no other object, and I shall have leisure to see if my imagination has bewildered my eyesight, or if it be a reality."

In vain, — for Mr. Aldersey considered his duty performed by showing himself in the forenoon, and had gone with his daughters to his boat immediately after the exercises of the graduates, thus robbing the old rafters of the church of the two beautiful countenances that had illumined them in the morning.

Upon their return to Boston, Ruth's raptures respecting the last performance were somewhat checked by the stern countenance of her father. The beauty of the young scholar, however, could not be wholly denied. There was no heresy, Ruth said, in those soul-illumined eyes ; there was even religion, she thought, in the hair that clustered round his noble head ; it was like the pictures she had seen of the saints ; and she looked at Naomi for sympathy. Naomi was just then observing attentively something in the water, and Ruth appealed again to her father ; but he turned from her with a contemptuous " Pshaw ! " Child as she was, could she expect her young-lady-like raptures to meet with sympathy from the stern Puritan ?

Mr. Aldersey was much out of humor. He had expected the President to invite him to dine ; he would thus have remained to the afternoon performances ; but he had been one of the deputies who had voted to reject the petition of the venerable Chauncy for an adequate support in his old age, and although the President was too mild, and

Digitized by Google

long-suffering, and truly Christian to feel resentment, yet, with his meagre living, he did not feel bound to invite the family of his opponent to the hospitality of his house.

Mr. Aldersey's displeasure was now freely expressed. It was his opinion that Herbert had inevitably ruined himself, and had given unpardonable offence to the clergy, especially to his patron, Mr. Eliot. He recollected and repeated some of his strongest expressions. "'From the clusters of the vine of persecution that has taken root in the church, you have wrung out blood rather than wine.' What did the irreverent boy mean by that?" he asked. Naomi said she thought his meaning was plain; he referred to the horrible cruelties that had been inflicted upon the Quakers. Mr. Aldersey answered only by a sneer.

"And what did the foolish boy mean by saying 'that *he* could not wear the grim cassock that was lined with persecution for mere opinions'? The Quakers had been punished for blasphemous acts."

"Perhaps," said Naomi, "he referred to Mrs. Hutchinson and her brother," — who had been banished from Massachusetts a few years before.

Mr. Aldersey had taken the popular side at that time, and would not act with the few sterner spirits who were for severe measures. He was then a young man, and had sided with the townspeople of Boston, and not with the clergy and court that exiled them. His features softened, for Naomi, without being herself conscious of the flattery, had caressed one of his most obstinate opinions, — that the church, and especially their favorite Cotton, were inquisitors in their treatment of Mrs. Hutchinson.

Ruth said, she thought he meant that he did not intend to put on the cassock in any sense. He did not intend

Digitized by Google

to be a minister, and, for her part, she thought he was right.

This was a latitude of interpretation that had not entered into the conception of Mr. Aldersey. To be educated at the College whose seal was inscribed "*For Christ and the Church*," and yet desert the ministry, was a delinquency he was not prepared to contemplate. It was enough for him that the Quakers at present filled up the pages of his book of criminal discipline.

Naomi felt, almost unconsciously, it was so kindred to her own mind, the deepest sympathy for this ingenuous and noble-minded youth. She saw before him a life of perplexity, if he did indeed enter the ministry, and remained true to his convictions, and faithful in declaring what seemed to him the truth. She felt an inexplicable interest in him. She wished she were his sister, his elder sister, that she might have a right to offer him her sympathy, her approbation, and encouragement. She felt as though she was much the older in years and in experience. They were in fact of the same age ; but a woman is more mature at twenty than a man of the same number of years. Afterwards, a man of genius gains rapidly upon a woman, who possesses only the receptive qualities of genius.

The oarsmen were obliged to bend themselves to their oars ; there was not a breath of air, and the whole country lay faint and panting under the burning sun. Nature seemed to pause in a breathless stillness, exhausted by the glaring heat poured all day from a perfectly cloudless sky. The Indian corn, so perfect in the morning, like a body of glowing emerald, was now wilted, its leaves curled and crisped ; the wild-flowers had closed their cups, shutting out the never-weary bee ; the birds were silent, the cattle lay panting under the shade, or stood

Digitized by Google

with their limbs covered in the cooling streams ; thick drops, like beads, started upon the brows of the rowers, and their panting breasts were covered with streams of water ; in the north rose a dark but welcome cloud, from whose womb the frequent lightning flashed.

The boat now touched the little wharf at the foot of the stairs behind Beacon Hill. The whole party pursued their way in silence through the burning heat of the sun to Mr. Aldersey's house, in the main or Washington Street, over that part of the hill afterwards called Pemberton's, and through Court Street, to where the patient, ever-ready, and consequently ever-waiting Faith received them at the door with her cheerful, sunshiny welcome. She helped the young ladies to unfasten their masks, always worn upon the water ; then assisted Mr. Aldersey to divest himself of his velvet dress-coat, and brought him his thin calico gown. She opened the sashes into the orchard, now lying in shadow behind the house. There came a faint odor from the few wilted flowers that lingered on the white-rosebush, and Faith perceived the wind had changed ; it was slightly east, and the black cloud had now spread through the whole atmosphere. The garden lay panting beneath the leaden pressure ; large drops began at length to fall, with a sound like sudden kisses, upon the foliage ; they became very soon more frequent, and then the full, refreshing stream poured down ; the fountains were opened ; never were streams glittering in the sunbeams so refreshing, nor the graceful fountain so beautiful, as these full, dark streams of running water. They fell full and pattering, like thousands of spent bullets, on the roofs ; the spouts from eaves, windows, and door-sills poured like horizontal fountains ; the garden-paths were full of water, and the stones in the front-yard assumed, under the polish of the water, the appearance of precious

Digitized by Google

stones, — rubies, emeralds, and garnets. The shower passed along, and the bright azure again appeared, but it left a delightful coolness in the air ; the garden revived beneath its refreshing power ; a drop of crystal hung upon every tiny leaf ; the birds, that yet haunted the rural gardens of the town, burst out in joyful notes ; the cows feeding upon the common lowed gratefully ; nature and man felt the reviving gift, — a blessing from the cool upper regions of the atmosphere upon the parched and sultry day.

They sat down to a late and slight repast, for Mr. Aldersey, expecting to dine at Cambridge, had left orders that no dinner should be cooked. Faith, however, was never unprovided. Tarts from summer fruits, and the wild strawberries brought in abundance by the Indian women to their liberal friend, formed a delicious refreshment after a weary and lengthened fast.

While they were enjoying the luxury of repose and of their cooling fruits, Ruth said, now that the business of summer was over, meaning Commencement, it was time to think of making preparation for their journey to Connecticut.

Mr. Aldersey frowned. He knew that it was a warm wish of Naomi's to visit her mother's and her own friend, Mr. Winthrop, the governor of Connecticut, and he had given his full consent to the journey ; the escort, even, had been hired, and he had had several conversations with an Indian that he had engaged for their guide, about the route, the rivers, the fording-places, and the mountains. But it was Mr. Aldersey's habit, as it is that of many others, to enhance the value of all his favors by having them reluctantly wrung from him. He had even gone so far as to send to England for a well-trained lady's horse to serve Naomi on the journey.

Digitized by Google

Naomi looked up from the strawberries she was eating, and asked her step-father if there was any chance of the horse arriving in season; for that it would be necessary to begin their journey by the first of September.

"You ought to set out to-morrow," he answered, "to have your journey safely over before winter."

"But the horse?" said Naomi.

Mr. Aldersey made no answer, and, after returning thanks, he rose from the table, and began to put on again his coat.

"But, father, you are not going out again?" said Ruth.

Yes, he was going to the wharf. A small vessel had arrived, and he had received information that Naomi's horse had been shipped in it. He was going to see, for he supposed the beast had broken his legs or his neck by being shipped in an improper vessel. His manner was altogether ungracious. There are people who do kind and benevolent deeds, but spoil them by the ungracious manner in which they are performed. Such people excite our pity, for they unconsciously rob themselves of the gratitude that kindness should receive as its reward. Such charity is not "twice blessed"; the giver robs himself of the blessing attending the gift.

As soon as the door closed behind Mr. Aldersey, Ruth gave way to the gayety of her age, and the raptures of the moment, about the adventures of the day; — first, however, the journey to Connecticut, the horse, and the becoming riding-dress the tailor was then making for her; and then, seizing Faith, she drew her into a chair, and, jumping herself into her arms, related all she could remember of Commencement, not sparing her ridicule of some of the staid and sage elderly young men, but expa-

Digitized by Google

tiating in the true style of fifteen about young Herbert, his angelic face, his eyes, and his hair, till Naomi, overcome with fatigue, had fallen asleep in her chair, and Faith, signing to her to be silent, drew her from the room.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVII.

" Pure love? there is no other, nor shall be
Till the worse angels hurl the better down,
And heaven lie under hell. If God is one,
And pure, so surely love is pure, and one!"

LET us return for a moment to Cambridge, where we left the excited multitude feasting upon the abundant provision of good things always the fashion in this liberal land. After the shower they had assembled again in the church, for the performances of the masters of arts. The young men looked in vain for the two fair faces that had shone upon them in the morning, awaking ardent feelings of interest; for although they were grave young Puritans, they were also young men; and it has been asserted as an undoubted truth, that where the brain is constantly employed with abstractions, especially where there is a sterility of spiritual ideas, as in the dogmas of Calvinism, there is also a tendency to extreme excitement of the passions, especially the passion of love. In the opinion of these youths, Ruth was far more beautiful than Naomi; and indeed her sparkling animation and fresh, youthful cheek might have charmed more delicate connoisseurs in beauty. Naomi alone dwelt in the memory of Herbert; he had not remarked Ruth; her interest in him,

Digitized by Google

betrayed by her rising color and enraptured attention, had not been observed by the side of the serious and thoughtful face, the sad and tender eyes, of Naomi.

Herbert, on entering, looked through the remote rows of female faces, much thinned since the morning, for the *one* expression, the soul that haunted his memory. His mind was in a singular state of excitement. A hundred wild dreams, romantic and improbable, but such as take possession of enthusiastic and imaginative youths, shut out from his mind the actual scene about him, but substituted actual visions of romantic hopes and bewildering expectations, all built, like fairy castles, upon air. Scenes of meeting with her whose name as yet he did not know, of aiding her in difficulties, even of saving her life in danger, all passed as visions through his mind. He was now at her side, now at her feet; he was looking into those pensive eyes; he was pouring out to her all the experience of his young life; he had found some one to listen to his aspirations, who could realize his vague dreams of the good and the beautiful; he had already passed long hours in confidential talk with her; he saw his whole life before him *couleur de rose*, with her at his side, when a rude clasp upon the shoulder recalled him to himself.

He looked around, and the visions suddenly vanished. He was sitting in the old meeting-house, with the cobwebbed rafters over his head; the declining sun was shining through the diamond panes; the revived and freshened branches of the trees waved between them and the westering sun. The venerable, white-haired Chauncy had risen in the pulpit to pronounce the final blessing; all were rapidly departing, and Herbert was again externally the simple young man who sat the evening before in his father's porch, — but, ah! how changed, how transformed within!

Digitized by Google

His sister was waiting for him to conduct her home. Their horse was found among many others, tied beneath the trees or the shelter of a hospitable shed; the poor beast was brought to the wooden block at the meeting-house door, and his sister mounted behind her cavalier, just as the sun threw its last crimson rays upon the winding river, that spreads so gracefully through the meadows in Cambridge. I have seen no spectacle more beautiful than that of the sun setting, from Cambridge. The shadows of Mount Auburn, and the deeper green of the meadows, the soothing influence of the whole, make it a scene where it is sweet to remember the dead, or to endeavour to make life worth living to those who are yet alive.

Herbert and his sister were obliged to proceed some distance up the right bank of the river to find a foot-bridge, or a fording-place at low water. The sultriness of a midsummer day was succeeded by cool breezes from the west, rendered still more refreshing by the shower. The dewy perfumes of the lowly plants, the ferns and the mosses, came gratefully to their senses as they were crushed by their horse's hoofs, as they wound through foot or cart-paths, through woods and thickets, between Cambridge and the borders of Roxbury. It would have been the more usual way to have crossed the ferry to Boston, and then to have taken the road over the Neck to Roxbury. But Herbert was in that mood of mind in which solitude is necessary, to indulge excited fancies and lovely day-dreams. They rode on in unbroken silence. Mary made several attempts to converse, but, receiving no answer from her brother, she also had fallen into silence. She was too humble and too submissive to urge her own will, — to persist in the desire to find sympathy for the emotions that were swelling her heart, excited by

Digitized by Google

the scenes of the day, and especially by the part her brother had taken. She respected his silence, also, because she knew the freedom of his opinions would have offended their father, and she supposed her brother was preparing to meet and soften his displeasure.

The moon had risen. It was nearly midnight when they had to pass through a narrow defile between high rocks, so thickly wooded with pines and hemlocks as to shroud them almost in complete darkness ; as they emerged, the little lake lay before them, its unbroken mirror silvered by a long bar of moonlight. The slight tinkling of the brook amid the sighing of the night breeze that gently stirred the leaves, the summer sounds of innumerable insects, the locust, the shrill song of the frog, fell on their ears, and, as they turned into the path along the brook, the lone and lowly farm-house, with the long shadows of its overhanging elms upon the grass, presented a scene of beauty that spoke to both their hearts.

How few there are who can appreciate such a night scene, and of those few, how seldom are their minds attuned to enjoy its penetrating beauty ! Such a night scene is instantly peopled with the forms of memory, the loved and the lost ; and, if there be such, the injured by a word of unkindness or a deed of ingratitude come back in the silent hours and walk amid its shadows ; conscience and sleeping love awake, and memory recalls every fond look and every unkind word. But if memory have no treasures, imagination peoples the scene with forms of beauty and incidents of joy ; the harsh and imperfect realities of life are forgotten, and man is made worthy to dwell in such scenes of beauty. But, ah ! the sigh that swells the heart as we gaze upon them proves that it is not yet attuned to their blissful harmony.

As the night wanderers cantered, upon the green turf,

Digitized by Google

to the farm-house door, the watch-dog broke the silence of the night, and the horses at pasture neighed their joy at the return of their companion. Late as it was, their father had not retired; he was sitting under the porch. Ever since his return from Cambridge, his mind had been sadly occupied with his son. He had been touched even to tears with his eloquence, and felt proud of the honest independence with which he avowed his opinions; but he felt that such freedom of thought made it as impossible for him to enter the narrow sheepfold of the ministry, circled round as it then was by the iron fence of the Cambridge Synod, as if he had uttered the Transcendental opinions of the present day. He was a mild but decided character, and had made up his mind, since he sat there in the moonlight, that his son should lay aside his student's gown, his black cassock, and immediately begin to harden his hands to the plough; that he should bare his forehead to the mid-day sun, and harden his slender frame with the labors of the farm. He met him, therefore, with a mild, but rather sorrowful, expression of countenance, said not one word of the day, and, immediately after his son had taken care of the horse and stepped upon the low porch, he bade both his children good night, and retired to his own bedroom, upon the same floor with the kitchen.

Herbert had been rudely awoke from the dreams of his excited fancy by the homely realities of his dwelling. The lowly roof, the familiar objects, the domestic animals, the care of his horse, dissipated his romantic visions, and when he returned to the house he felt as though he had been walking in his sleep. Still, a kind of perfume was left in his waking mind, a feather of the wings with which he had soared to heaven remained, and he looked at his sister, who was waiting for him, at first as if she had been

Digitized by Google

a stranger ; then, recollecting his taciturn and her solitary ride, he kissed her without speaking, and retired to his little chamber.

When Herbert entered his chamber, the quiet moonlight that lay across the floor and the stillness that pervaded the little room formed a strong contrast to his agitated feelings. His father's countenance, almost stern in its sadness, had recalled the young man to a complete consciousness of his position. He had been dreaming ; he was now awake. But he could not come down so abruptly from his highly rarefied state ; it was like falling from an air-balloon into a dense fog. The homely familiarity of every object seemed to mock his enthusiastic aspirations. The room was too small for the spirit that struggled in his swelling breast. As soon as he thought his father had fallen asleep, he crept softly down stairs, lifted the latch, and went out into the free air. He wandered on to the ravine, crowned on both sides with lofty hemlocks and pines ; the deep and solemn shadows, the dirge-like sound of the wind, as it moved among the rustling leaves, breathing a mysterious music from an invisible orchestra, calmed his excited feelings, and by degrees he was able to take a true and serious account of himself. He looked upon himself as others would look upon him, and found he had that day, by what would be thought a boyish ebullition of folly, or a premature expression of crude and untenable opinions, ruined his worldly prospects, if, as had been decided by his friends, he adopted the clerical profession. The thought of abandoning the chosen paths of intellectual labor, of going back with his father to the plough, never entered his mind. He could pursue his dearly loved studies, he could devote himself to letters, and become at least a teacher of youth, if he were thought unworthy to be the instructor of men. He

Digitized by Google

could live upon little, quietly, unknown, in the midst of woods and fields ; —

> " A way through life out of the beaten path,
> But ever in the road to the pure truth."

In time, perhaps, the whole community would become of his way of thinking ; breath from the lips of truth would at length, like the kisses from the lips of the devout, wear away the wood and bronze of the age. Then came a whisper from his heart, — the vision of beauty that had to-day met his eyes with sympathizing glance would still remain to soothe his studious or his solitary hours.

The enthusiast, thus reasoning with himself, became less agitated. He bared his unsullied, but his humble and honest mind to God, and became fortified with new faith, new resolution, if not with new hopes ; he returned to his chamber and slept the untroubled sleep " God giveth his beloved."

Herbert awoke late the next morning, and saw perched near his bed, upon a chest of drawers, a little dove, purely white, that seemed waiting for him to awake. The circumstance was entirely natural ; he had been accustomed to feed the doves, and to throw grain from his window out upon the grass while he was dressing ; the birds tired of waiting for the morning supply, one of them, the whitest, had entered to see why it was withheld. But to Herbert's excited imagination it seemed an omen of good, a messenger of happiness, sent with a promise of hope, that the waters of doubt would soon subside, and the verdant fields of joy spread out before his footsteps.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Old Newbury, had her fields a tongue,
And Salem's streets, could tell their story,
Of fainting women borne along,
Gashed by the whip, accursed and gory!"

CHANCE favored the wishes of Herbert; he met again the object of his waking and his sleeping dreams in a manner the most unexpected.

As we have said in a preceding chapter, the present summer and the year before were marked by severe persecution of the Quakers. They indeed provoked these severe measures, by returning after the laws of banishment were passed, wantonly exposing themselves to scourgings, branding, the pillory, and the scaffold.

Margaret, the nurse of Naomi, as soon as she passed from the influence of the affection of her former nurseling, and the protecting guardianship of her presence, began to use the intemperate language of the Quakers; to proclaim their almost blasphemous doctrines in the streets, the meeting-houses, and, as it were, upon the very housetops. She was warned and reprimanded, and at length arrested, tried, and sentenced, together with another woman, to receive thirty lashes, and to be whipped from town to town at the cart's tail, and then to have her tongue bored with a red-hot iron.

Digitized by Google

The day that Naomi was at Cambridge, an anonymous note was put into her hand, telling her that this atrocious punishment was to be inflicted in ten days; that it was to be commenced at Cambridge, continued at Watertown, and so on to Dedham; and that the last consummation of cruelty, the boring of the tongue, would crown the whole. The note also added, that there would be an attempt made at Cambridge or Watertown to rescue one of the women.

Naomi, in union with the feminine gentleness of her character, possessed a courageous, an almost lion-hearted independence in the cause of humanity, and where the service of those she loved was involved, no effort seemed beyond her power. She determined, and without asking counsel of any one, to attempt the rescue of Margaret at one of the towns mentioned as the scene of her disgraceful punishment.

Fortunately for Naomi, the horse spoken of before had arrived, free from all injury, and proved a superb lady's horse, gentle and perfectly well trained. Naomi was an excellent rider. The fashion of the time, or rather the absence of carriages, demanded that ladies should be able to sit and to manage a horse with safety to themselves. Naomi had never consented to mount a pillion, and this horse had been sent for solely for her own use. The day of the scourging at Cambridge, Naomi would again try her new horse, which she had only mounted a few times, preparatory to her long journey to Connecticut.

The success of her plan, she knew, must depend upon its secrecy, and the wholly accidental nature of her interference. She would gladly have ridden alone, but the dignity of Mr. Aldersey demanded that his step-daughter should not ride unattended. She was therefore accompanied by a serving-man, and followed by Sambo, at a

Digitized by Google

respectful distance. The best and shortest way for Naomi to reach Cambridge was by crossing the ferry at what was afterwards Lechmere's Point. There was some little difficulty in making her horse enter the ferry-boat, and the man who attended her said, in a low voice, he thought it would be much better to choose the road over the Neck for her excursion. Sambo answered, that Miss Omai did not wish always to ride the same way, as if she was going to mill.

As soon as she had reached the other side, and was again mounted, she was surprised at the number of people hurrying one way, — all with excited and varying expression, either of indignation, disgust, or a sort of wondering pity. The road was not then the broad thoroughfare it is at present, but rough, irregular, and in some places rocky. Naomi's horse, accustomed to the smoother roads of England, sometimes hesitated to put his delicate hoofs into the deep ruts of the road, so that Naomi was obliged to pay a close attention to the animal ; gentle and docile as he was, he needed to be used to the new ways to be perfectly safe and amiable in them. Naomi, intent only upon one object, — to reach Cambridge, where the first scourging was to take place, in time to mitigate its severity, — scarcely observed that she was herself an object of curiosity as she rode by, and that the women rushed to the open windows to express their surprise, and in some instances their contempt, that a well-dressed and beautifully mounted young lady should be hurrying to such a disgraceful spectacle. They exulted in their own superior delicacy and refinement, and thus concealed from themselves the stirrings of envy at Naomi's beautiful appearance.

We learn from the annals of the times, that the severity of these scourgings depended much upon the character of the persons who inflicted them ; and as the culprits were

Digitized by Google

passed from hand to hand and town to town, if they had not sometimes fallen into the hands of a soft-hearted executioner, delicate women would not have survived the cruelly lengthened punishment. They often passed through the hands of those whose stripes were laid tenderly on, or never touched the bared shoulders. Naomi's object in her ride to Cambridge was twofold; she hoped to bribe the executioner, if he should prove a cruel-hearted man, and, if there should be an attempt at a rescue, to aid Margaret, by her own personal exertions, to escape and secrete herself. The plan may seem Quixotic and wholly improbable to my readers, but women have often succeeded in enterprises so dangerous or delicate that men have shrunk from attempting them.

When Naomi came near the College, she saw an immense crowd collected around the cart, upon the open plain. The scourging had not begun, but the noise and uproar were prodigious. Naomi kept aloof, as though accidentally passing the spot, and observed minutely the whole preparation for punishment, — the whole apparatus of torture. The cart, drawn by two very strong oxen, was half filled with straw, — a humane provision for those women who fainted away under the severity of the scourging. The honest, stolid, but mild and even humane countenances of the oxen intimated no sympathy with the inhuman preparations going on under their very breath. One of them had laid himself down, patiently ruminating and chewing the sweet morsel, while he drew the head of the other down uncomfortably towards him; even in these patient, submissive creatures intimating the supremacy of the one over the free-will of the other.

As Naomi kept herself aloof, she could not but overhear the conversation of those who seemed to be observers like herself.

Digitized by Google

"Well," said a mild-looking man, "I always said, that if the government had let them alone from the first, there would not have been a single Quaker in the Bay at this moment. Why, look at Rhode Island; they have no trouble there, and no persecution."

"Yes; but who would live *there*, with no church and no religion?"

"Well," said another, "what will Charles say? Not three months since, Mary Dyer was hung, and he has forbidden all persecution for the sake of religious opinions."

"They say Norton is going to be sent out to make an apology; and they seem determined to do up the punishments before he goes," said another.

"Bad work! bad work!" cried a third; "'t will do no good; for every one they punish, ten come to share the notoriety."

"Well!" said a stern-looking man, "you talk like children. Who could live in the Bay if they let in all sorts of opinions, — Ranters, Brownists, Antinomians, Quakers? I say, hang them, — hang them all, — free the land from the vermin! The ministers are right, and so are the magistrates; and if I had my way, I would not stop nor stint till a Quaker could not breathe the air of New England."

An old woman who stood by, with two little children clinging to her skirts, and who seemed to be listening to the conversation, now interposed. "'The violent man shall perish,' saith the Lord; and I hope you will see your wife or your daughter in the same situation of those poor women," she cried. "Look at these poor orphans clinging to me; their father and their mother have both been banished, for no other crime than giving the shelter of their roof to one of the persecuted Quakers. What are these children to do? I say, the magistrates who ban-

Digitized by Google

ished their parents should pay for the support of the children."

"You are their grandmother," said one; "you must take care of them."

Another interposed and said, — "It is but just that the children should be supported by the government of the country that has made them orphans."

"Yes," said the old woman; "they tell me, and the minister bawls in our ears every Sunday, that 'the cry of the widow and the orphan shall be heard'; but those who should hear turn a deaf ear."

Naomi gathered from all she heard, and from the temper manifested by the people, that the majority were decidedly against severe measures; and that, should she even attempt a rescue here, she would carry the sympathy of the mob with her; but she wished to avoid all notoriety, and, if possible, to withdraw Margaret secretly away.

She called the man who accompanied her, and told him to penetrate the crowd and bring the constable who was to execute the punishment to speak with her. The constable appeared in a few moments. His countenance indicated no ferocity; he was easily entreated to mercy, but he said the crowd would by no means be balked of their amusement. They were principally College and other youths, who had come out to see the fun; and, as the punishment was ordered by the authority of the court, there could be no harm, they said, in their seeing that it was well executed. They were light-hearted and perhaps generous youths, and if Naomi could have addressed each separately, no doubt he would have yielded and been ashamed of his brutality; but they were the strongest, and determined to hold their power. There seemed, therefore, no chance of a rescue or of a mitigation of the punishment.

Digitized by Google

Naomi was looking around in disgust and in despair, when she saw the youth who had excited so much interest on Commencement day issuing from another part of the College yard, apparently intending to avoid the noise and tumult, as a thing that in no way interested him. As he turned, he perceived her; she also caught his eye, and the thought flashed through her mind that he, so eloquent, so much beyond his years in character, better than any other could turn his young comrades from their purpose. She called him to her side. The extremest joy for a moment stopped the beating of Herbert's heart, the blood rushed to his brow, and then emotion left him pale. Naomi made no apology; she went straight to her object, and told him she relied upon his power over his young comrades to mitigate the severest part of the punishment, the insults and ribaldry of these thoughtless youths.

Herbert rushed instantly into the densest part of the crowd. His presence was hailed by a shout of joy from one portion of the mob, by derision and insult by another. "Here comes the heretic," cried not a few voices; "his turn will come next." "Here comes the Quaker! Put on thy hat, friend! Where is thy broad-brim?" for Herbert had taken off his hat when called by Naomi, and stood there uncovered, his fine countenance glowing with shame and indignation. "Friend," cried another, "art thou for the whipping, or for boring the tongue? Yea or nay, friend!"

He cried out shame upon them; reproached with burning language the young men of his own age for their unmanly conduct in aggravating the misery of poor, defenceless women, for debasing themselves by insulting the fallen and the helpless. They paused, then listened, and many of them slunk away, ashamed, and even weeping.

The power that the young exert upon the young, the

Digitized by Google

respect that an ingenuous youth feels for one just above him in years, the electric influence of courage and boldness upon the young mind, are well known. Herbert's success in appealing to the generosity of these youths was instantaneous, and far greater than if a dozen graybeards had harangued them upon their duty. The mob was quelled, and soon they began to steal away ; but, as was to be expected, a reaction took place, and the College youth declared that no whipping should take place near the College grounds ; the sacred precincts of the Muses should protect the unfortunate, and no woman should be tortured within their hearing. As the constables were slow in complying, the young men completed their triumph by taking the oxen from the cart and drawing it themselves, with shouts and songs, a quarter of a mile on the road to Watertown.

In a short time the place was cleared of the mob ; the few officials remained with the fainting woman and her friends. Naomi turned to thank Herbert. She held out her hand to him. "This is not the place," she said ; "but come to my father's house, and I shall have time and know how to thank you."

Herbert heard ; his soul spoke in his eyes, but no word came to his lips.

Naomi now obtained from the soft-hearted constable, that Margaret should be placed upon the straw in the cart, and carried on thus to be delivered into the hands of the officers at Watertown. Naomi had caught the expression of Margaret's face as she lay fainting on the cart, no longer confident and full of the pride of martyrdom, but supplicating and humble in its suffering expression ; and she determined, at the risk of every thing, to follow on to Watertown, and endeavour to rescue or succour the poor woman. Her presence at Cambridge had solely the ap-

Digitized by Google

pearance of accident; she therefore rode rapidly on, keeping aloof and much in advance of the cart. They had scarcely proceeded a quarter of a mile, when they saw the Watertown officers approaching to take the poor woman into custody. The whipping at Watertown had been appointed to take place at eleven o'clock, but the mob and delay at Cambridge had retarded the progress of the cart. The populace had collected, and, after waiting some time, fearing they were to be balked of their amusement, they had driven the constable with a crowd on the highway, to secure their prey.

Naomi, as we have said, rode rapidly on to Watertown, having sent Sambo back to Boston to inform her step-father that she should not return to dinner, and leaving it to Sambo's ingenuity or simplicity to explain her absence. When she reached the place of punishment at Watertown, many of the persons collected had become weary of waiting for their pastime, and had gone home to dinner. This was a favorable circumstance. Another circumstance that favored Naomi's plan — hastily but clearly formed — was, that friends with whom she had some intimacy dwelt immediately in view, — indeed, exactly opposite the spot where the punishment was to be inflicted. Naomi therefore alighted, and was received with a lively welcome, — a godsend as she was to the retired family of daughters; her horse was cared for, she was pressed to stay to dinner, was soon divested of her cumbrous riding-dress, and, by the time the cart arrived with Margaret, she could take her place at the window, simply as one of the family, and apparently with no more interest than the rest.

Margaret was still fainting upon the cart; but the people had dispersed, and the constable was weary, so that the whipping was put off till after dinner. They had no intention of losing the amusement of seeing a poor fellow-

Digitized by Google

being put to the torture, which, indeed, they believed she richly deserved. Naomi, in the mean time, represented to the family the fainting condition of Margaret, and urged upon them the humane and merciful purpose of bringing her into the house for a short time, for some refreshment. The wife was tender-hearted ; the husband stern, but not inhuman. To her surprise and joy, they acceded to her request. Their host, as she found, was a justice of the peace ; it was, therefore, only taking her into custody, to be again given up to her punishment. As Mr. Ashurst, the host, went out to become surety for the woman's re-delivery, Naomi saw Herbert Walton turn from the road that led to Cambridge. She hailed his appearance as almost providential ; for his courage and presence of mind would help her to execute the plan already formed. He had followed on from Cambridge, drawn by an irresistible enchantment, and had reached the spot almost as soon as Naomi herself. " A true devoted pilgrim at the shrine of love can measure kingdoms with his faithful feet."

Naomi, under the pretence of assisting Margaret, went out, and, unperceived, held a moment's conversation with Herbert. Margaret was brought in and laid upon the bed in a small room adjoining the kitchen. The family were now summoned to dinner, and Naomi, having mentioned to her host and hostess, although without explaining the reason, that she felt a warm interest in the culprit, requested to be permitted to carry the refreshment to her herself. Margaret was revived by the food and wine, so that she could make an effort for her own freedom. She had tasted the fruit of her violence and fanaticism, and found it had the bitterness of death. She was ready and glad to escape the uttermost penalty.

Naomi having secured the door, it was but the work of a moment to invest her with her own riding-habit, her hat,

Digitized by Google

and mask. In these primitive times, there was but one maid-servant; she, fortunately, was waiting at dinner, because they were this day honored with the company of a guest. Naomi, therefore, led Margaret unobserved through the kitchen-door. Herbert stood at a little distance, concealed by the shed, holding Naomi's horse already saddled; they assisted her to mount, and pointed out the path she must take to reach the most secret part of the forest, where he assured her he would meet her at nightfall, and lead her to a place of safety. It was the work of a minute. Naomi looked her thanks to Herbert, and returned, unruffled, calm, and composed, to take her place, which she had only quitted for a moment, at the table. The whole thing had been so simply and so easily done, — no suspicion existing in any mind of a connection or understanding between the lady and the prisoner, — Mr. Ashurst so entirely confident that the prisoner was safe, — the reader will readily understand how quickly and naturally the escape might be managed, and take not so much time as it has taken to relate it.

An hour had scarcely passed when the constable came to demand his victim. The young ladies urged a respite for the poor woman; but Mr. Ashurst said the course of justice must not be arrested, and went himself to bring her forth. The bedroom was empty. The magistrate instantly understood the whole. He looked with bitter reproach at Naomi; but she met his look with a serene countenance, that seemed to say she was ready to justify what she had done. Miss Naomi's horse, too, had disappeared. The boy at work in the stable was questioned. A young gentleman, he said, had saddled the horse, according to the lady's orders; he had afterwards seen the lady mount and ride towards Mount Prospect, a high hill in Waltham, then and now of that name.

Digitized by Google

Mr. Ashurst returned to the ladies. He was a magistrate; a theft had been committed within his premises, and, looking at Naomi, he said, — "I shall instantly despatch a warrant to arrest the thief, — a young gentleman, I understand, from the College."

Naomi turned slightly pale. "It is unnecessary," she said; "the horse was saddled at my order, and I gave it to the young woman to assist her escape." She then related, in a few words, the relation in which Margaret stood to her; her long services to her mother and herself, and that she left Boston that morning with the intention of rescuing her; she had been more successful than she had dared to hope, and then she added, with a sweet smile, — "I am in your power; you are a magistrate; you can inform the government, or yourself send me to prison."

Mr. Ashurst looked at her for a moment in silence, his countenance changing from a stern and cold expression of displeasure to sympathy and admiration; then he said, with Puritan gallantry, — "It would be a pity to lose those pretty ears, which you undoubtedly will." And he ordered his daughters to lend Naomi a hood to conceal them on her return to Boston. Although he treated the subject lightly in the presence of his daughters, he was seriously alarmed for Naomi. He ordered the boat to be got ready, and prepared to accompany her to Boston. Upon the way, he placed before her the extreme peril in which she stood. An inquiry would be instantly made. He should be called upon to account for the escape of the prisoner from his house, and, placed under oath, he must tell all that he knew. "Indeed, the young gentleman," he said, looking keenly at her, "might be content to pass for a thief, and perhaps even would screen her by taking the burden of the whole escape upon himself." Naomi would not admit the thought for a moment. Mr.

Digitized by Google

Ashurst recalled to her the instances in which persons had been severely punished with fine, imprisonment, and even the loss of an ear, for merely conveying food or relief to imprisoned Quakers. Her guilt would be held enormous. Had she no friend in Rhode Island to whom she could immediately fly, under pretence of a visit ?

No ; they had been purposing a visit to Connecticut, and had only waited for the heat to subside, and a few preparations to be made.

" Set off, then," said Mr. Ashurst, " instantly. Hurry your party, and fly beyond the jurisdiction of Endicott before the report of your interference reaches him. Let not another sun rise, if possible, at least do not let it set, upon you in Boston."

" But," said Naomi, " how is that possible ? My horse, the only one I can ride with safety, is gone ; and my father, — how can I explain it to him ? "

Mr. Ashurst took upon himself to reconcile her father to the necessity of their immediate departure, even without imparting to him the whole extent of her danger. The part that Naomi had taken in the escape of the woman was to remain a profound secret, known to no human being but themselves.

When they reached Mr. Aldersey's house, the dinner hour was long passed ; but, as Naomi had taken the precaution to send Sambo home with an apology, they had taken dinner without anxiety. But when they saw Naomi arrive, on foot, with an ill-fitting dress, and indeed disguised by mask and hood, they were greatly alarmed. Mr. Ashurst undertook to calm the excited mind of her father, and Naomi took the trustworthy Faith aside, and told her the whole history, without reserve, and the necessity that her good friend, Mr. Ashurst, thought existed for her immediate flight.

Digitized by Google

Faith instantly comprehended and entered into the alarming posture of affairs; but, like the resolute and hopeful soul that she was, her courage and energy and activity rose with the occasion. She saw that Naomi was completely wearied and depressed; the cause for courage being over, she was suffering under the reaction, and trembling under the responsibility she had assumed; like all persons with heroic souls, and delicately strung nervous temperaments, she was suffering from exhaustion. Faith's cheerful, hopeful spirit immediately took the lead. Difficulties vanished under the enchanting wand of her resolute and bright and active mind. Her own habit would exactly fit Naomi. Ruth had been long prepared and waiting with childish impatience for the journey; the rest of the party could be instantly collected; every thing could be got ready for their departure in less than twenty-four hours.

"But my horse?" said Naomi.

Faith for an instant looked grave, but said, with an encouraging smile, — "You must mount a pillion, behind one of the men; the loss of a horse is less than the loss of an ear." And she turned with alacrity to continue her preparations for the journey. This was no trivial business; bread must be baked, and meat cooked, and preparations made for a journey of several weeks through a wilderness where scarcely a human habitation would be met with. While the weather remained delightful, they would sleep under such tents as they could form from their blankets and buffalo-skins.

Mr. Aldersey had by this time been made acquainted with the new aspect of affairs; for it had been found necessary to inform him of the necessity of Naomi's immediate flight, and the difficulties attending it. Like all selfishly important people, he was angry at the misfortunes

Digitized by Google

of others, if he was obliged to sympathize with them, — if they disturbed his peace or interfered with his convenience. He began, therefore, to scold at Naomi's folly, and, as was always his habit in all troubles, to call violently for Faith. Faith, obliged to be in every place at every moment, appeared. "What 's to be done?" he said, while he looked angrily at her, as though she had lost a valuable horse, or saved a Quaker. Faith assured him they were doing all they could to repair the mischief. The church-member seemed to be more irritated by Faith's serenity, and said, the cursed folly of young women was incurable; that ever since Naomi had been under his roof, she had, by her singularities, brought him into danger, and perhaps he should have to endure the disgrace of seeing one of his own family with cropped ears, or something worse.

"No," said Faith, "they do not cut off the ears of women yet; they would be more likely to deprive them of their tongues."

"They deserve," said Mr. Aldersey, "to lose both, for meddling with things that do n't concern them."

Faith turned Mr. Aldersey's attention to the fact, that they must escape before the offence was known. They must set off that very evening. This gave him something to do. His own dignity would be compromised should his daughters depart on a journey without a full and respectable escort. He set off at full speed to hasten the preparation of one of the elders, who was going to New Haven to bring home a wife, and to bustle and fret about the horses, and, by his nervous irritability and contradictory orders, to retard rather than hasten their work.

It was nearly dark. Faith's active and constant superintendence had brought every thing into a state of great forwardness. The horses — the most important consid-

Digitized by Google

eration for their safety and comfort — were to be carefully shod, and every part of their accoutrements in good order. Naomi had been most anxious to find a horse that she could ride alone, but was obliged, reluctantly, to resign herself to the necessity of mounting a pillion behind one of the men. Faith had somewhat reassured her with the promise, that a lady's horse should be procured and sent after to overtake them in a few days. This was the state of things as the evening closed in, when Sambo came, breathless, from the stable, and said Miss Omai's mare was standing all saddled in the manger, and eating as if the poor beast had had a hard day's work.

Immediately a knock was heard at the door, and Herbert presented himself, all glowing with exercise and happiness at having been able to render a small service to the person whom on earth he most wished to serve. Naomi's thanks, warmly expressed, he received with a deprecating reluctance, amounting almost to pain. He was ashamed that she could call that a service which seemed only a favor to himself. That which had been the blossom, the full-blown flower of his life, the opportunity to labor with her in a work of benevolence, he should ever look back upon as the birthday of happiness, — the only day in the calendar to be remembered, when all other dates and fond records should be effaced ! Could she thank him for that which he was ready to fall down upon his knees and bless her for allowing him to do ? Such is young love ; all self-forgetting, it dwells only in the thoughts of another.

Naomi informed him briefly of her immediate flight. For an instant the color left his cheeks ; but he rallied instantly, and entreated Naomi to let him form part of her escort through the woods. This was a bold and strange proposal from one to whom she was speaking almost for the first time. But there was in Naomi's character and

Digitized by Google

manners something so transparent, so sincerely open, such freedom from coquetry or artifice, that it seemed to Herbert that all his thoughts lay bared before her, as all her character was transparent to him, and that she was to be talked with in sincerity, as with a saint. The degree of their acquaintance did not depend on time. They were already tried and trusted friends. Like young trees, that had grown apart till a certain height was reached, they must now interweave their branches, and the sweet fragrance of their blossoming must be mingled together. Yet they were essentially different. Herbert was a poet, but one who had tasted only of Siloa's fountain, that flowed fast by the oracle of God. He knew neither the strength of his powers nor of his passions. He had lived under severe Puritan discipline, and the warmth of his feelings had been cooled by the dews of Hermon. Naomi had not a powerful imagination. She possessed only what is called a receptive genius. She caught easily the inspirations of others, and the impression made upon her was ineffaceable. She had disciplined all her being to calmness and composure. Impressions made upon her were like those in the rock; they never wore away, if they were made when the rock was warm and fluid. Perhaps the most remarkable trait in her was her deep humility, and the total unconsciousness of her own worth. At this moment she was unconscious of the impression she had made on Herbert, but felt in herself that he was nearer to her than any other. Did the stream of their true love run smooth? We shall see.

At eight o'clock in the evening, their preparations were all completed. The elder could by no means be persuaded to such a hasty departure; and as the reason for their flight could not be disclosed to him, they were obliged to set out, with his promise to follow, after one

Digitized by Google

intervening day. Indeed, their departure in the night was kept a profound secret. It was arranged that the ladies should go by boat to Watertown, and sleep under the hospitable watchfulness of Mr. Ashurst; the men, with the horses and baggage, were to follow them before the dawn and after the moon went down, so as not to excite the suspicion of the good people of Boston. They also were to go by boat to Watertown, and thus start all fresh and cool upon their long journey.

The hour had struck. It was nine in the evening, and the streets of the little town were still and empty. Ruth drew to her father's side, but the severe domestic rule of the Puritans forbade the familiarity of an embrace even between father and child. Naomi came close to Faith, and the tears started to the eyes of both, but they said not a word. At this moment Mr. Aldersey interposed, and said they could scarcely hope for a blessing on their journey unless they asked for it. It was the hour, indeed, for their family worship. At such a moment, even the common repetition of a formal prayer would have been solemn and touching; now their hearts were moved, and they prayed in earnest.

Mr. Aldersey and Faith would accompany them to the boat. Slowly and silently they passed through the deserted streets, and the broad patches of moonlight that lay between the gardens and scattered houses, and the shadow of Beacon Hill, till they came to the boat, rocking against the little wharf at its foot. It was nearly high water, and the steps that led down to the boat were nearly covered. Mr. Aldersey observed a man standing in the shadow of the wharf, and whispered to his daughters to put on their masks. Naomi looked round, and whispered again that "it was a friend." Silently they stepped into the boat. Faith grasped the hand of Naomi, and

Digitized by Google

Naomi returned the pressure. Mr. Aldersey placed his daughter upon the thwart, and stooped (was it to give her an embrace or an admonition ?), and as he stepped back upon the wharf, the boat shot out into the moonlight ; and the two — yes, the *three* — anxious and silent figures stood watching and praying till it was out of sight.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIX.

"The woods, — O, solemn are the boundless woods
Of the green Western world, ...
When dimness gathers on the stilly air,
And mystery seems o'er every leaf to brood!
Awful it is for human heart to bear
The might and burden of the solitude." — HEMANS.

BETWEEN the setting of the moon and the dawn of the early morning, the escort, horses, and baggage left Boston silently and secretly by boat, and under the shadow of the Brookline and Brighton shore, and by the aid of a night-breeze from the east, went as far as Watertown, to start from thence upon their long, exciting, and somewhat perilous journey. The path from Boston to Connecticut River had been frequently travelled, and by ladies too, since that heroic company led by the Rev. Mr. Hooker and Captain John Mason through a "howling wilderness," when they were obliged to ford rivers, ascend mountains, and wade through almost impassable forests. To borrow the words of an eloquent pen, — "As we are now borne over those pleasant regions by the startling velocity of the steam-engine, the eye of one who loves the memory of the fathers gazes intently on the swift-vanishing objects, to catch each hoary rock or tree, which perchance may have looked upon the weary march, or echoed the holy prayers, of those Heaven-led wan-

Digitized by Google

derers. Many a mile must have been trodden which was not progress, and the winding paths of the wilderness only lengthened the labors that they eased. The infant was borne upon a single arm of its mother, while her other hand guided the gentle cow, whose back was loaded with babes that had but just ceased to be nurslings, through tangled thickets and swamps, and across the frequent streams. The sturdy yeomen, with their heavy firelocks and ammunition, carried such household goods as were made dear by former associations, or necessary in their wilderness work. As far as their way led through the forests, it was doubtless easier then than it would be now in the same regions. The Indians were wont to burn the underbrush and the shrubs in the fall of the year, so that in the spots which they chiefly visited the woods were as clear and as pleasant as an English park. Their narrow and winding paths indicated the safer courses, the easiest ascents, the cool springs, the fords, and the places for rest." *

The road had at this time been marked out, the best fording-places or the safest ferries indicated upon the rivers; the traveller's path had been carried round the mountains and morasses, and a safe bridle-path worn through the thick forests. Indeed, there were some settlements made before 1660, and several rude cabins where travellers, if compelled by the weather, might find shelter and food. Still, it was a hazardous and fatiguing expedition for ladies, and required courage and the power to endure physical privation and fatigue. Under other circumstances than those of flight, it might have been considered an excursion of pleasure to this strong and courageous party, consisting of eight persons, to whom two

* Life of John Mason, by Rev. G. E. Ellis.

Digitized by Google

others would be added when the elder and his servant joined them.

When they started they adopted an order of proceeding, which, as much as circumstances would permit, they determined to preserve. First rode two strong and athletic men, hired for the occasion. They had served in the Pequot war, and were well acquainted with forest travelling, and with all the hardships of an unbroken country. They were true-hearted, religious soldiers, and the safety of the party was to depend mainly upon them. They were mounted upon able horses, capable of enduring the road, and armed with matchlocks and pistols, and unencumbered with baggage, except the fur robes strapped behind their saddles, that were to serve as shelter and couch when the party were compelled to pass the night in the open air. These men were dressed in close-fitting leathern doublets, with broad leathern belts, in which they carried ammunition, and even sheathed arms of excellent workmanship. Breeches of leather and high military boots completed their equipment, if we add hats or a cap of white felt, close to the head, with a visor in front, but no rim behind, showing the thick and close-cut hair. They wore their pointed beards and mustaches; and as they rode along, stern and taciturn, showing in their very bearing the courage and firmness of the Puritan soldier, they presented a most formidable and respectable front to the party.

Then followed a gentleman about thirty years old, who had been a clerk to Mr. Aldersey, and was now returning to Connecticut to visit his parents; to him Ruth was intrusted, mounted upon a pillion behind. He rode upon a strong, long-enduring roadster, steady and without fault. The young man himself was grave and taciturn, a Puritan of the strictest caste. His gravity effectually checked

Digitized by Google

poor Ruth's ebullitions of gayety ; and her father had intrusted her to the care of this young Puritan because he was doubly armed against any attempt at coquetry on the part of Ruth, by his character, and by being supposed betrothed to a lady in his adopted home. All Ruth's sallies of gayety or petulance rolled off from his exterior of impenetrable gravity, like showers of peas thrown against a rock.

A boy or young man followed, whose duty it was to perform all the little services for the young ladies at mounting and dismounting, adjusting and taking care of their slight baggage ; in short, such as would fall to a page had they been travelling in Europe. The rear was brought up by two servants of Mr. Aldersey's, armed with pistols, who took charge of and carried the baggage and the provisions for the whole party, with the simplest implements for cooking the game they expected to find abundant, and to live upon during their whole excursion.

Naomi, however, was the centre and principal attraction of the party. She was mounted upon her beautiful jet-black mare, the gentlest and kindest of animals, who seemed always happy when Naomi was on her back, and ever looked around confidingly upon her as she adjusted her seat, as though she said, " Fear not, I am surety for thy safety." Naomi wore a close-fitting riding-habit, and a black beaver turned up at one side with a short, bending plume of white. It was of the same fashion, although smaller, that we see in the portraits of the time of Charles the Second. The stem of the feather was often richly set with jewels. Naomi's was plain, the beaver so far turned up as to show the fair temple. A mask of black velvet was attached to the hat with hooks, but worn only when the sun and wind were too powerful for comfort. Ruth's beaver was similar in form, of white, and turned

Digitized by Google

up with a bow of cherry-colored ribbons. The beauty of Naomi's appearance was heightened by a splendid saddle-cloth of rich, undressed skin. She carried only a small bag, attached to the pommel of the saddle.

Such was the party, with the addition of their guide, a well-known, faithful, and sure-footed Indian, who knew every turn, every track, and all the by-paths, the fords, the springs, the ferries, and the dangers of the road. He accompanied them on foot, armed with a rifle, and furnished with the means of snaring and taking wild animals. His dress and accoutrements were picturesque; he wore his head-dress of feathers, and, as though conscious of his superiority, usually marched at the head of the party.

They mounted their horses just as the red and rayless sun, foretelling a warm day, rose above the mist, and shot a bar of gold across the river, upon whose margin they were all collected. They had wished, in order to avoid observation, to start an hour earlier, but they had waited for their guide; he had been too much occupied with his toilet to mark the progress of the dawn. And now all were ready. There were stern and solemn faces, together with the bronzed, impassible features of the Indian guide; there were also youthful spirits, and hearts beating with hope; and in one breast was throbbing a deep, though subdued joy; but they parted in silence and with thoughtful countenances, like pilgrims setting their faces toward a distant or foreign country. So stern and serious were all Puritan undertakings, that what might have been an excursion of pleasure became like a solemn duty of life.

Although Naomi and the whole party had commenced their journey under the influence of haste and fear, rather than as an excursion of pleasure, yet she could not but soon feel the exhilarating influence of the weather, the

Digitized by Google

beauty of the soft September atmosphere (for they recollected it was the first day of that month), the deep azure of the overhanging canopy of the free heaven, the dewy freshness of the forest, filled with the fragrance that breathed from the thousand odorous roots and plants, disimprisoned by the hoof-broken turfs; and as she rode along, her imagination peopled these scenes of beauty with beings worthy to live in them. Who has not, when under the influence of soft, autumnal weather, in the freedom of wild nature, far from the scenes of the conventional world, felt the desire to go back to the primitive state of society, — to live the simple life, to be content with the few and unexpensive luxuries, that nature furnishes, — to live with nature, alone with nature? Another moment, and the loneliness of this thickly-peopled and breathing nature presses on the heart; for these living, happy creatures make man feel the isolation of his majesty. The birds are in concert with each other; the melody of one heart responds to that of another; the thousand-voiced, the mass-meeting concerts of the insects, the troops of animals, the uncounted leaves, the gathering clouds, hold no communion with the lonely heart of man; and in this ever-peopled solitude he feels too drearily alone. It is only the heart that is filled with happy memories, or still happier hopes, the heart that carries its own world with it, that can beat calmly and peacefully in the solitudes of nature. Where deep sorrows have left their scars, where the breast has become the tomb of the early loved, and the tears drop inwardly upon buried treasures, the solitudes of nature press too rudely upon these cloistered sorrows; the dead arise to us, and we call upon them in the impassioned accents of love, but there is no answer from within these harmonies of nature for the mourning heart. We call, — we call in vain upon

Digitized by Google

the beloved name. The soul of the beloved, — is it near, and does it whisper to the heart that which stills its beating and its vain longings? We cannot tell; the mystery is all around us; it throbs in the air, it trembles in the low voice of the fitful breeze; it looks down in the silent, tranquil stars, and spreads itself all around in the darkly, doubly mysterious night. We are enveloped and breathe within it, but we cannot penetrate the ever-infolding veil of Isis. The faded wreath of cherished blossoms, that has been so long pressed upon the empty breast, will not revive again amid the fresh dews of living nature.

Naomi as yet had little to regret in the past. The memory of her mother she cherished with tender veneration; but her mother had died in the natural course of Providence, as she must expect to die before her own child, should she ever be blest with one. Her heart, on the contrary, was filled with sweet, but scarcely acknowledged hopes. The voice to whose pleadings to accompany her she had last listened still haunted her memory. She caught herself most constantly dwelling upon the youthful, but most noble, expression of his features. She said to herself, "There is nothing ill can dwell in such a temple," and the words that were put even before that time into the mouth of Isabel were already in her heart, — "My affections are most humble; I 've no ambition to see a goodlier man." She scarcely remembered that she was a fugitive, and soon felt the full exhilaration of the weather and the scene, which, like the touch of an electrical chain, was soon imparted to the rest of the party. The sympathy between her and her horse was most striking. The mare pointed her ears and arched her neck, and was only prevented by the unevenness of the forest paths from showing her joy, as little children do, by dancing under her light burden.

Digitized by Google

Poor Ruth, as I have said, was much restrained from the expression of her mirth by her situation, mounted behind the staid Puritan upon his sober animal. She could not, however, refrain from the mischief of giving a smart cut to the other horses, as they passed her, with the twigs she plucked from the overhanging trees.

A short ride of only twenty miles — and it was the easiest part of their journey, because the path was plain and even — completed the first day ; and here they found a house for travellers, rude accommodations, indeed, but such as the country and the times could afford.

The next night, as the weather was so soft, and warm, and dry, they determined to encamp, and spend the sleeping hours under such tent as they could form for the ladies of their cloaks and buffalo-robes. For this purpose they chose the side of a hill, crowned with a beautiful chestnut grove. Before the ladies retired into their tent of buffalo-robes and cloaks, Naomi proposed that they should close the day with thanksgiving, — a custom so familiar to our fathers, that any one of the company, except the Indian, could have led the devotions of the others.

The next morning, as they descended and emerged from the woods, they came upon a beautiful little lake, embosomed in gently swelling hills, from which there was an outlet, with a lovely cascade. The scene was so beautiful, that Naomi, who, till the arrival of the elder, was considered the head of the party, and also to gratify the Indian's desire to fish for trout, proposed that they should stop. They alighted, and tied their horses on the bank. The ladies sat down upon the shady side, while the men cast their lines for fish. This lovely gem of water, clear as crystal, lay reposing in the lap of hills, and reflecting every hill-top, every tree, every leaf, in its

Digitized by Google

tranquil mirror. It was a double picture, the inverted one having only a darker shade of background. It is impossible to paint in words the beauty of such a scene upon a calm autumnal day, and it can be felt only by one whose soul is in harmony with the waveless mirror, the unstirred leaves, the solemn silence of the hills, keeping watch around such a gem of water. The voices of the fishermen came softened to the ears of Naomi, as they spoke in lower tones, awed by the solitude and silence of the scene. Ruth strayed about, gathering wild-flowers, and Naomi, with silent tears, lifted her heart to God.

They soon obtained abundance of fine trout, kindled a fire, and *improvised* convenient gridirons of forked twigs, and cooked a delicious dinner. This was a degree of enjoyment that none had expected, — a true life of nature, a delicious repast without table or cloth, an Indian feast with Christian sympathies.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XX.

"No foul nor ugly thing
Hath power, I 'm sure, in this new land, —
Goblin nor witch!"

At the close of the afternoon our travellers came upon a little cabin, a human habitation, perceived only through an opening on the right hand of the forest. It was built against the side of a gigantic pile of granite, being completely sheltered on the back by the granite ledge, from whose fissure waved a tuft of beech-trees; thus was the little hut completely sheltered from winter's cold and summer's heat. A green and slightly worn path led up to the door, near which was a little patch of cabbages, on each side, rudely fenced in, to protect them from wild animals. This little human habitation, betrayed to the travellers by the smoke that curled up through the branches of the beech-trees, was of the wildest and rudest structure; but it was placed in a scene of singular beauty. A few yards before they reached its door, a rapid brook ran over its pebbly channel, crossed just in front of the cabin by well-laid stepping-stones.

As our travellers wished to water their horses at a spot easier for the beasts to drink, they followed the stream deeper into the forest. They were soon arrested by a pile of rocks, like the one against which the cabin was

Digitized by Google

built, except that this had been partly split through the centre, and divided by a fissure of a few feet. Within this opening, as though protected on each side by a wall of adamant, issued, full and clear, the beautiful stream of water that formed the sparkling brook. A few feet from its birth it fell into a deep hollow, forming a basin partly lined with rock. Here it lay, a deep and silent pool; a goat might jump across it, but it was so deep that even in the hottest and dryest summer it was scarcely diminished, the generous fountain ever pouring in, as the hot and thirsting sun drank up its treasure. Around the pool grew many low pines, — a spot of deep green amidst the brown forest. This "diamond of the desert" seemed placed there by the hand of Him who feedeth the young ravens, as an ever-bounteous source of comfort for those whose voices are dumb in the ear of man. There it lay, — when the sun shone upon it, a diamond; when it was in shadow, an emerald, set in a frame of ever-living green. The stars shone in it, and the moonlight revealed it to the beasts that thirsted. It was in a place seldom visited by man; but the partridge and the quail and the little singing-bird knew it well, and the deer, the moose, and the wild fox came there to drink. Overflowing the pool, it flowed on, wearing its channel deeper and deeper, making sweet music with the enamelled stones,

"Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge
It overtaketh in its pilgrimage."

Our travellers, as they could not get round the head of the brook, dismounted and led their horses across the stepping-stones. As they approached the cabin, a dog sprang out and barked violently. This drew to the door a woman, whose age might have been about sixty years, although she was much bent and worn, apparently not wholly by the number of her years, but by experiences

Digitized by Google

that bring more age than years. She was without a cap, and her gray hair, drawn back from her forehead, was tied tightly at the back of her head. Her dress was a petticoat and short open gown of homespun woollen stuff, dyed a dark olive by the rind of the shagbark-nut. Her Indian buskins were laced high up on the ankle. Her dress was decent, even careful in its arrangement, and showed that, though living in the desert, she still retained the self-respect of one who had been accustomed to civilized neighbours. Her countenance was grave, even stern, with an expression of settled, but resigned melancholy, although there flashed from her eye the light of the keenest intellect.

Although in her appearance there was a stern and settled calmness, like that of one who was looking inwardly upon memories with which the actual world had no sympathy, she had nothing of the cynical and almost ferocious expression that those poor creatures acquire who are cursed with the reputation of being witches. Deep lines of care and thought seamed her face, and her skin, so long exposed to all changes of weather, was nearly the dark olive-color of her garments. Although it was long since her solitude had been cheered by the sight of any fellow-being except the roving Indian, no smile of surprise or pleasure gave these visitors welcome. She was not rude, however. She asked the ladies, with a settled sadness of expression, to alight and taste of the fountain, the charm and attraction of her dwelling; and she took a large wooden noggin, bound with iron hoops, and went to bring it fresh from its rocky reservoir.

The charm of this deeply secluded nook was irresistible. Naomi wished to alight, and both ladies entered the cabin. Ruth trembled; but Naomi assured her the old woman was less a witch than herself. The interior of

Digitized by Google

the cabin was rude in the extreme, — formed partly of mud, of stone, and of logs ; the interior was wholly and neatly lined with thin oak-bark. A bed, a loom for weaving cloth, and a spinning-wheel, almost filled the small room. In one corner was a primitive fire-place, formed of four smooth and flat stones, one of which, larger than the others, served for the hearth ; a chimney of clay and lath led off the smoke through the roof. Every inch of space around the roof was occupied with suspended articles, indispensably necessary to the poor solitary, — bunches of yarn, ears of corn, dried herbs, Indian calabashes filled with her small stores of food, — for the reader must recollect this was the whole of the cabin ; there was neither bed-room, nor closet, nor loft ; all the simple necessaries of life were crowded in this small hermitage, and yet there was an air of neatness, arising from the strict order of every article. The clay floor had been newly swept, and the witch's broom, formed of twigs of hemlock, stood near the door.

The first thought upon entering was, how little and how much was requisite for human life, — how little of convenience and luxury, how much of bare necessity ; and yet a soul amply furnished with inward resources and inward peace could live here content, if not happy.

Naomi had scarcely time silently to make this reflection, when the woman returned with the pure, cold, sparkling water, and from an Indian gourd gave the ladies the refreshing draught. Naomi thanked her and said, — "You have here in your solitude one precious gift, fresher and purer than it is elsewhere."

"I have many," she answered.

"Your solitude must bring you much communion with your own heart and with God."

"Yes ; we may become ever nearer, but never near,

Digitized by Google

to God. Even here his face is hidden with storms and blights of winter."

"In winter," said Naomi, "your solitude must be absolute and dreary indeed."

"The Indians do not then forsake the path that passes by my door."

"But why are you so wholly alone?" asked Naomi. "Had you no sister, no niece, that could have shared your exile?"

The calm and stern features of the woman showed a passing shade of deep feeling. "I cannot gather up," she said, "the leaves that the wind has scattered upon the forest paths, nor the refreshing drops of the brook that have sunk into the sand."

Naomi was much interested in the reputed witch. Her figurative style of conversation seemed not the result of art, in order to impress the ignorant, but the spontaneous expression of a mind that had reflected much in solitude, and expressed her thoughts as they arranged themselves in her own mind. Naomi consulted with the guardians of their journey; the sun had long passed the meridian; the spot was beautiful; they would sleep soundly, lulled by the music of the brook; she and Ruth would prepare their bed under the roof of the witch's cabin, and the men could spread their tent beneath the trees. They consented, and Naomi made the proposal with as much delicacy as possible, asking for the hospitality of one night.

It was a surprise and a pleasure to the lonely woman, that Naomi did not share the prejudices that had affixed the opprobrium of witchcraft upon her, and she began with the utmost alacrity to arrange her small cabin for their accommodation.

While preparation was made for their frugal supper,

Digitized by Google

Naomi and Ruth strayed into the wood, accompanied by the faithful animal that had greeted their approach, with more fidelity than courtesy. Not far from the cabin there was a little spot free from underwood or thorns, where a slender tree, a stranger to the forest, had been planted by the hand of man, — a weeping willow, whose pendent branches hung over a little mound that was evidently a grave, so small that it seemed the resting-place of an infant. Stones had been placed closely around it, and grass and herbage had grown up between, so as nearly to cover them; fragrant herbs, too, had been planted there. It was a sacred spot; for as Ruth bent down to pluck the wild thyme, the dog expressed his deep displeasure by a loud bark, and, seizing Ruth by the skirts of her habit, drew her away from the spot. It was, indeed, a little sanctuary; an opening glade in the forest admitted the rays of the setting sun, and they fell on the little mound, moist with nature's tears; the hanging branches whispered a hymn befitting the sleep of innocence. Had, then, the witch buried her only treasure here, — here, in the lonely forest, amid the changes of the seasons, and the still more dangerous ravages of wild animals? The stillness, the sweet repose of the spot, the mystery that seemed to brood over it, were suddenly interrupted, as they turned away, by the clear, loud carol of a bird, perched so high that he was able to look into the eye of the setting sun. The bird, no doubt, was inspired by the brilliant departing light, but it seemed to Naomi that he sang "so sadly sweet, so sweetly wild," a vesper hymn of peace to that sleeping child.

They returned to the cabin, where their refreshment was already spread out. The witch, as we shall continue to call her, had gone silently, but not sullenly, about making preparation for their night's repose. She asked no

Digitized by Google

questions, and no smile disturbed the calm and settled melancholy of her countenance. She prepared her own bed with clean, and even fine, sheets for the ladies, and when they had taken off their heavy riding-habits, invited them to the welcome repose. Naomi remonstrated; but she assured her it was no hardship for her to sleep in her chair, and even should she be wakeful all night, it would be no unusual occurrence.

Although prostrated by fatigue, Naomi felt no inclination to sleep; the sounds of the forest, so strange and new to her ear, — the ceaseless waving of the beech-trees, swayed by the wind, above her head, — the monotonous gurgling of the brook, as it throbbed fuller and fuller in its channel, — the unceasing chirp of innumerable crickets, — the melancholy note of the whip-poor-will, that seemed perched near the roof of the cabin, — and a strange, unknown sound, like that of a lost child, that she was told was the cry of the owl, — all kept her senses awake; then that calm and solitary being — so composed and self-sustained, cut off from the rest of her kind, living only in fellowship with wild nature and the wilder Indian — kept her mind awake and busy with the mystery.

A moment only, and the weary Ruth was wrapped in that exquisite sleep that comes from fatigue and health, and Naomi called the witch to the bedside. "We know," she said, "the outline of your singular history, and the confidence with which I trust this dear child under your roof must convince you how much I esteem you. Tell me, therefore, how you have supported your strange solitude so many years."

"I complain little of solitude," she said, "and fear it less. Besides, I am not alone, except at night; the feet of the Indians keep the path well worn to my cabin-door; they have faith in my simple remedies for their various ail-

Digitized by Google

ments. I am to them a great medicine-woman ; but I never let an Indian pass a night under my roof. Yours is only the second company that has ever sought its shelter. In the night, my faithful dog bears me company, and the spirits of the dead, — if not in spiritual presence, yet in intimate thought, and in promises that a few short years only will keep me from them."

Naomi ventured to mention the little mound she had seen in the forest. " Ah ! " answered the other, " my witch's caldron contained no bitter herb till that little child was taken from me ; but," she added, " God is good in what he takes, as well as in what he gives. She was all to me ; but how could the young spirit have borne this solitude, and how could the witch's child have gone back to her kindred without bearing the brand of opprobrium upon her ? "

The woman again became silent ; but Naomi, interested and curious, still urged her to tell her the circumstances which caused her to be branded and banished from the world. She answered almost in the words of her who, in about the same age, but in another hemisphere, was burnt for sorcery. We will leave the witch's story for another chapter.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXI.

"The only sorcery I have ever practised is that of the ascendency of a strong mind over a weak one." — MARESCHALE D'ANCRE.

"THE only witchcraft I was ever guilty of," said the woman, turning her composed countenance towards Naomi, "was the experience gained by years, and a kind of gift, I may call it, for observing nature, — the aspects and changes of nature. There was, too, a mystery in my circumstances, that was increased by the loneliness of my manner of life.

"You have heard, perhaps, that, when the first companies of Pilgrims came to these shores, they found that in some places small settlements had been already made, although in almost every case abandoned; yet they found white men had visited these savage solitudes before themselves; a few even were still left. These persons were surrounded with mystery, and I believe told little about themselves."

"Yes," said Naomi, "I have heard that a Mr. Blackstone was living at Trimountain when Winthrop and his company arrived, and that they purchased of him the right to settle there."

"Our residence was upon one of the islands," said the witch; "we sought secrecy more than aught else."

Digitized by Google

"May I ask," said Naomi, "the cause of this mystery?"

"Ah, yes! since death has disposed of all, there are none living to be injured. The gentleman whom I may call my benefactor and my master, since I was born in his father's house, and was indeed his elder foster-sister, my mother being his nurse, was the son of one of the noblest houses in England. He was born in the north of England, and was a younger son of one of the great Catholic families of that part of the kingdom. You must have heard how bitter were the divisions in the beginning of the civil wars between the Catholics and Protestants, even without the aggravation that the Puritans gave to these divisions. My master was a true Catholic, but he loved a daughter of one of the sternest enemies of the Catholic Church. You know that no enmities are so deep and incurable as religious enmities." Naomi sighed, and the witch regarded her with interest. "The bans of marriage were forbidden between these two loving hearts, and the daughter of the Puritan threatened with disinheritance, and, what was too terrible to think of, another husband was to be forced upon her. Love taught her cunning. She made a semblance of obeying her friends. But I need not tell you, that, when the *true* feeling of love exists, there is *no* obeying; the heart may break in the struggle, but love will live in every broken fragment. They agreed upon flight together, — no matter where, — but only where they could live for each other. My master hired a small vessel, and freighted it with every thing that could be needed in a new country, and with provisions for at least two years. An attached domestic, a middle-aged man, and myself, then just twenty years old, were all who accompanied him, to remain and share his weal or woe. The captain and ship's company were to return, and he bound them with

Digitized by Google

oaths not to reveal the place of his retreat. Before my young master and mistress left their native shores, they were married by a Catholic priest. In the faith of the husband, this was a valid and true marriage, and his young wife had such faith in him that she never questioned its legality.

"The voyage was long and stormy, and, through the illness of his young wife, — ah! she was a young creature, only fifteen years old, — my master was glad to land upon the first welcome shore. It was an island, — one of the largest near the continent."

"What island?" asked Naomi.

"My master gave it the name of his wife; but they changed it, and I have forgotten the old name."

"What was that dear name?" asked Naomi.

"*Elizabeth;* — but they have given it the old Indian name.

"We had taken out the frame and all the finished parts of a small house. The man that came with us was a carpenter, a farmer, a gardener, — he had been a little of every thing, — and before winter the house was all finished, and all necessaries, even comforts, were within it. The island was almost wholly covered with wood, but some spots and patches of fertile land were already cleared by the Indians, who had previously dwelt there, but had been swept away by a pestilence a few years before we landed; one family only remained, and they were aged and friendly to us. It really seemed as though a good Providence had prepared the place for us. There was one only drawback; it was visited with severe storms in winter, and the ocean between it and the mainland was lashed into angry and terrific mountain billows. We had taken with us cows, sheep, horses, domestic animals of all kinds. The first winter passed away like a day,

Digitized by Google

made cheerful by work, by security, and happiness; I must say, also, by the fear of God. My master, although a strict Catholic, was a devout man, and when I looked at him, with his young wife by his side, and not a cloud upon his noble and serene brow, I blessed God, and prayed that it might continue for ever.

"When the spring opened, we found so much to be done, that we must all work to keep up with the rapidity of the strides of nature. We all worked, — even the young, fair, and delicate hands of my mistress were hardened by work. She taught the fragrant vines to twine around the house, and look into the very windows. Ah! I now see, as though it were yesterday, her pretty fingers, all black with the soil; then she would run, like a laughing child, to wash them in the brook that flowed close by, and come back, waving them in the air to dry them. In the winter we spun our wool, we wove our cloth, and made the vestments of a son of one of the first peers of England. Look!" said the witch to Naomi; "upon that very wheel, the little fingers of my lady have drawn out the flax to make the linen for her husband's shirts. We had no communication with England. It was believed there that the son of the Earl of —— was dead; he had perished at sea with all his company."

"O!" said Naomi, captivated by this picture of domestic bliss, so adapted to her own quiet inward feeling of peace, — for, like the tailor-bird, "she could have sewed herself a home in a leaf," and there have sat content, — "O, and did not this paradise last?"

"For some years," said the witch, "the white wings of peace brooded over our habitation. In a few years, — I believe only two had passed, — the cheerful, musical voice of a child was heard in our cabin, and that completed the cheerfulness of the house. The laugh, even

Digitized by Google

the cry, of a child makes a home of the poorest house. The richest is hardly ever a home, to a woman's heart, without that music. The little Mildred, for it was a girl, and named for my master's mother, and she was named for a saint, made a little heaven of our island. Then, indeed, it became a paradise; but I believe my master thought more of his English home after the birth of his daughter. I often saw tears in his eyes when he looked at her. He seemed to be asking himself what would her future be in that solitary place.

"But let me remember that blessed time of content; — the mother and her child; contented servants; plenty, smiling all around; the rich harvests of our labor; the father returning from his hunting, or with his boat from fishing, and exploring all around! The moment his boat touched the cove, the little Mildred was wild till we took her to her father. Then he would come up to his house, proud and happy, bringing her in his arms. The young wife stood in the door; the mother stretched out her arms to both, and he took them both together in his own; he was a strong and powerful man, and both were like children in his arms."

"And had you no visitors, no interruption to so much peace?" asked Naomi.

"My master sometimes went to the mainland in his sail-boat. He visited the settlements at Plymouth, and some venerable white men came once from thence and staid all night at the island. They urged my master to go with them to the mainland, for the sake, they said, of their religious privileges; they did not know he was a Catholic. My mistress, too, had now but one faith with her husband. But no, the strangers were Puritans. There could have been no fellowship and no good neighbourhood with such. Thus we lived ten short years, —

Digitized by Google

ten years, did I say ? — yes, ten years of happiness. I was happy, though I had left my bachelor, who had besought me to marry him the next year, and he never sought to find out where I had gone," — and her voice became tremulous and sad ; " but I was happy in seeing those I loved happy."

The witch paused, and Naomi, after waiting a short time, said, " Will you not finish your narrative ? "

She started, and seemed to try to recover the lost thread of memory. " I have mentioned that my master went often in his boat, visiting the islands and even the mainland. It was a lovely morning in September, and his wife entreated him to let her accompany him ; but I had already then begun to observe the signs of the weather, and persuaded her to stay at home that day. I even told my master that I saw signs of a tempest ; he laughed at my fears, and told me I should never be hung for a witch, unless I were more weatherwise, for the sky was as serene as an angel's face. Not in vain had I warned him. One of those sudden gales arose, so frequent in that mild month, — a squall ; the boat was driven a wreck upon one of the islands, and the body of my master, without the breath of life within it, was thrown on shore. The faithful dog alone stood over it. It was brought, all swollen and covered with tangled sea-weed, to the house. My mistress was the first who saw it, and she uttered a shriek that has ever since sounded in my ears. I hear it now ! " and the witch paused and covered her ears with both her hands. " She pressed her hand," continued the witch, " with violence upon her side, and at that moment her heart broke. I took her in my arms, and placed her on the bed. She never spoke again ; her eyes were fixed, but there was neither mind nor meaning in them. I placed her little daughter by her side, and she clung to

Digitized by Google

her mother and called her name ; she called also the name of her father. There was a slight trembling of her mother's lips, but she spoke not, and before morning she had breathed her last.

" Death was merciful ; it came at once. Many die of broken hearts, but not so swiftly. They live on, bearing in the breast the broken chain of the spring of life ; as the Bible says, ' the wheel is broken at the fountain,' and we know not why they droop. Some terrible blow, some cruel, heart-breaking unkindness, has fallen upon them, forgotten by others, perhaps even dimly remembered by themselves, — forgiven, if not forgotten (for the hearts that break are those tender ones that forgive all injuries) ; they live on, drooping and withering, and like the rose, from which the heart-leaves have been torn away, they fade and languish."

The witch paused, as though unwilling to continue her narrative. Naomi was weeping. There was something so unaffectedly simple and expressive in the witch's language, that it affected Naomi more than the most artfully-wrought tale. She seemed like one relating things passed away into dim obscurity, even as though they had belonged to another world. And so it was to her. These were the memories of her youth, and so much had intervened, that when she paused, it was, as it were, to shut the book of the past, — a book sealed to every one but herself. Ah, how many chapters there are in the life of every one, chapters written with golden letters, which we would fain shut up like pleasant memories ! for some dark misfortune has closed them, or the angel of death has clasped together the covers, and has placed her unbroken seal upon them. Who that has lived long has not a whole library of such books ?

" Yes," she began, after a pause, " our ten years of

Digitized by Google

happiness were all wrecked and gone. I was left alone with a child eight years old; a little girl, gracious and comely, but fatherless and motherless. Did I tell you, — ah, no! I forgot to mention that the man of all work, the right hand of my master, perished with him. We were left, therefore, with only the old servant. What could I do, a lone woman, with a young child? I had heard of the settlements upon the mainland; that they were Christian people, and, although Puritans, I believed they would not suffer the fatherless and the orphan to perish." Naomi could scarcely repress a smile. "Thank God, I had been taught to read and write. I sent the old servant with an Indian, in his canoe, to the settlements, with a letter to the venerable men who had once visited the island. I recollected their names then, but, alas! I have forgotten them now. I had not heard then, that a settlement had been made two or three years before at Trimountain, or Boston, by Winthrop and his company, or I am sure I should have sent to them. However, they came immediately to see me, and having made every inquiry and satisfied themselves of my position, they asked about my master's name and family. I did not feel at liberty to tell his real name and family; it seemed to me, that, as he had always concealed it, I should be betraying a trust that had been accidentally committed to me. He had himself given them before a name that belonged to some member of his family. They asked me if my master had been married to her he called his wife. Fortunately I had found the marriage certificate of the Catholic priest, in which the marriage had taken place under one of the family names, and I placed it in the hand of the old man. He looked at it with great indignation and contempt, and then, showing it to his companion, they said that my master and mistress had been living in

Digitized by Google

a state little better than concubinage. This roused my indignation, and I was upon the point of dismissing them for ever from any concern with my poor orphan upon whom they cast such shame. But I, a lone woman, what could I do for her upon that desert island? — for such it appeared to me then. I swallowed down my indignation, and told them I wished to exchange the possessions of my master on the island for something of equal value upon the mainland, so that his poor orphan might enjoy the privileges of education, and of growing up with equals and companions of her age. God knows, I had but one object, one motive, in life. I wanted nothing myself. It was all for her.

"They complied with my wishes. The next day they sent assessors and appraisers to value my master's improvements, which were to be exchanged for a farm, or rather for land, of equal value, upon the mainland, in the midst of the settlements. The improvements that my master had made could only be valued or appreciated by one who would live on the island. As no one was found to do that, we lost a great deal by the exchange; but we received a small farm with a small log-house upon it, and retained half our sheep, cows, horses, swine, and fowls. The furniture, also, and all personal property, were retained by the poor orphan. I believe it was a fair exchange, for the fertility of the cultivated land on the island could only be of value to a person who would live there wholly. It was too far from the mainland to be kept as a summer garden and retreat, as the islands in Boston Bay now are by the rich merchants of Boston. — But my story is growing wearisome," said the witch, observing Naomi's heavy eyelids.

"Ah, no!" said Naomi. "I was only thinking.

Digitized by Google

Was the little grave I saw in the wood that of your poor orphan ?"

"O my dear young lady!" said the witch, "the events I have just mentioned passed nearly thirty years ago, long before your eyes ever saw the light. No, the dear child grew up a fair and comely young woman ; she became a member of the Puritan church, and was married, when she was only seventeen years old, to one of the best young men in the colony. He had taken to her when we first moved to the mainland, and I verily believe determined then to make her his wife as soon as she was of a suitable age ; for he immediately began a kind of superintendence of our farm, hired men for us to carry it on, and took care that we got all that we could from the sterile soil. My Mildred saw no one that she liked better, and I think she loved him, but not as her own mother had loved her father. He protected her always from the slanders that the rigid Puritans would have thrown upon her birth ; she was grateful to him, and I hope gave him her heart when he put the marriage ring on her finger.

"With her hand she gave him the farm and all we possessed. I say we, because, as I had received no wages since I left England with her father, I had some claim upon the property ; but I could not urge it. Experience had given me some insight into character and the motives of action, and I could not but believe, that, had my Mildred's property been less, she would have less value in her husband's eyes. Could I, then, take one iota from the orphan child of my benefactors ? The log-house was replaced by a frame one, or rather a new house was built upon another part of the farm.

"Scarcely two years had passed when again the house was made glad by the ringing voice of a child. A little

Digitized by Google

girl was born, and now no Catholic saint was called upon, but the Scripture, beautiful, simple name of Ruth was given her." Naomi had observed, when they first arrived, that the witch had started when she called her sister by the name of Ruth.

"The little girl was scarcely one year old when her father became uneasy and discontented, sometimes gloomy. He was often reading and pondering upon the marriage certificate of the parents of his wife, which had fallen into his possession with the property, and the result of it all was, that he determined to go to England with his wife to have the marriage proved, and lay claim to the inheritance that had probably fallen to her. His friends tried to dissuade him from this futile, and, as they told him, useless project; but, as I had suspected before, the love of money lay at the root of his character; he would not be dissuaded. They went to Salem, and took passage in a small vessel from thence. It wrung the poor young mother's heart to part with the babe; but the father would not think of taking it unless I would go with them. But my conscience was not free to go, having taken the oath, with all the others, never to reveal my master's place of retreat. I thought, too, that, as he had renounced his name and his inheritance, it was not for a stranger to step in and lay claim to them. But to the great contentation and joy of my heart, the little Ruth was left with me." The witch paused once more. It seemed as though she again wished to shut the book of memory.

"Well," said Naomi, "is it too painful for you to proceed?"

"It is a common saying," continued the witch, "that the heart grows languid and cold as we advance in life. Those have always been languid and cold who say so. No; as one after another our dear ones drop away or

Digitized by Google

leave us, all the heart's love is centred upon those that remain. The little Ruth grew to be a lovely child. All the graces and charms of her ancestors seemed to be given as a dowry to the portionless babe. She had her grandmother's deep-blue eyes, the color of the clearest sky, and her waving hair hanging all around her white shoulders. She had her grandfather's proud look and noble bearing, and she was tender and docile like her own mother. Did I make her an idol? God forgive me if I did! She was my all. Her father's friends left her to my care, and I prayed to God every night, upon my bended knees, that I might be true and faithful in my duty.

"One year passed away, and we heard nothing of her parents, or of the vessel in which they sailed. But passages were long then, and perhaps she had gone out of her course. We waited; — another and another year also passed, and there were no tidings. I went to Salem and saw the owners of the vessel; they had given her up for lost. Ah! who now did that dear child belong to, — to her grandfather, her father's father, for he was living, or to me? They did not want her, but they wanted the acres that her father had left. I now presented my claim for twenty-four years' services. It would have almost purchased the farm, and I should have thus secured it to my little Ruth. But no; I had no note, no promise, to show, no obligation on the part of their son; and how did they know, they asked me, that the whole had not been paid? This wrung my heart, — I said no more. Ruth's grandfather took possession of the farm and the framed house, as her guardian, he said, and he had indeed been appointed her guardian by the Court of Probate. He put a tenant into the house, and let the farm for the benefit of the little orphan, as it was said; and he

Digitized by Google

gained high praise for his liberality, by allowing me to live rent-free, as it was said, in the old log-house. I did not choose to be indebted to his generosity, and it was agreed between us, but not known to the world, that the little Ruth should remain with me (it would have taken all the horses in New England to have torn her from me); but her board was an equivalent for the rent of the log-house. Ah! my dear young lady, this was a trial for my still proud nature, to receive even the semblance of a favor from a man who had doubted my honesty, who had dared to say that I had lied for the sake of gain. The day will come when the secrets of all hearts and lives will be revealed, and those who have here been covered with the rags of opprobrium and ignominy will put on the white robes of innocence."

Naomi's sympathy was deeply excited; her voice was impeded by tears; at length she said, — "You had the comfort of the little girl. Ruth was a solace to you. She never was torn from you. But how, may I ask, did you incur the displeasure of the government? How did you get the ill-will of your neighbours? — for I have heard that you were banished, and you know that I cannot believe that you deserve to be cut off from the fellowship of Christians."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXII.

"Her whom the world had cast without its pale,
'T is thine with ever-cheering voice to hail;
To call from deepest shade to purest light
The noble soul, whom none beside invite."

"It was not strange," continued the witch, "that I was considered a singular being, — that my eventful life and my lonely situation should have drawn upon me the curiosity of those, whom, I verily believe, if they had known the particulars of my life, would have befriended me. But I was no talker, and I felt bound in honor not to reveal circumstances about my master and mistress which they had sought to conceal. My reserve offended my neighbours. Then I did not become a member of the Puritan church. I was born in a Catholic family, and I had no experiences to relate of conversion, although I had always sought to live near to God, in doing mercy, and in walking humbly." Naomi sighed so deeply, that her sigh attracted the attention of the witch.

She paused, and then again resumed her narrative. "I had early a strong desire, even before I came to this country, to observe and study the works of nature. I lived in the country, — a hilly and fertile country. I gathered and found out the virtues of plants; I observed the causes of the different ailments of animals, and I was

Digitized by Google

able to draw inferences from all that I observed. It is not all who can do that. God had given me an observing mind, and I am humbled that I have not been able to bring more good done by me to honor his gifts. After I came with my master's family to this country, and lived upon an island in the great ocean, I had every opportunity to observe the sky in its ever-varying aspect, the mutual influences of clouds upon the ocean, and of the ocean upon the clouds, and the changes produced by the winds upon the broad expanse of water. I found, ere long, that I could predict with certainty, almost, what kind of weather would be on the next, or even the next succeeding day; for certain changes invariably follow certain precedents, and nature in its illimitable variety is still constant. You must suppose, too, that, living alone as we did upon the island, all the knowledge that we possessed was brought into constant use. I added to my knowledge of the virtues of plants, and learnt as much from as I taught to the Indians, who constantly visited the island in their canoes. But, until I removed to the mainland, my studies were for my own pleasure, and my knowledge was exercised only for the benefit of our own little family.

"My log-cabin was near the coast, and we lived in the midst of seafaring people. I was a lone woman; the changes and sorrows of fifty years had ploughed my face with deep furrows, and robbed me of all the comeliness I ever possessed. Perhaps I looked like a witch. I know not how it began, but the neighbours came to me to ask advice in the ailments of their animals, and sometimes even in their own. I took no fee, and thus made the physician my enemy. The fishermen began to come to me to tell them what weather would be on the morrow, or if they should have a night of successful fishing. I

Digitized by Google

used no artifice, no deception, always telling them the simple truth, and the reason for my faith in the signs of the atmosphere.

"The relations of my dear little Ruth seemed to have forgotten her existence. They left her wholly to me, and I was too happy to work hard for our maintenance. Perhaps I was wrong, but I was so afraid of her relations taking her from me, that I would not remind them of her existence by applying for what was really her own. I looked forward to the future, when all should be restored to her; but while she was an infant, I would be her protection and support."

The witch paused. "Was I wrong?" she said.

Naomi was so absorbed in her narrative she could not at first answer. She merely said,—"You wronged only yourself."

"The first thing, I believe, that caused the neighbours to whisper their idle suspicions and calumnies, and drew the curiosity of others upon me, was, that the fishermen would come to my cottage and ask me, as they called it, to give them a favorable wind. My predictions of the weather were almost constantly true, and many of them offered me money. I always refused it, and they would force it upon the little Ruth, who was playing about the cottage. There was nothing wrong in this, for my science in the weather had been obtained by attention and study. But it fixed a stigma upon me. I took pay, as they said, for my supernatural knowledge, obtained by my intercourse with familiar, wicked spirits. In the dead of the night, when my solitary candle lighted my honest labors, I was entertaining diabolical visitors, and the money I received was the coin of the Devil. I was shunned and deserted; the feet of the passers-by turned off, and left the path to my cottage overgrown with weeds; even the

Digitized by Google

innocent Ruth was shunned and jeered by the school-children as the witch's child. If I ventured out in the street, those I met would pass on the other side. At the house of God, the bench upon which I sat was left empty, and those who usually occupied it would crowd themselves upon others that were already full. The deacons visited me; they seemed to have prejudged the cause, and I sighed to think that a little farthing taper, if carried before the eye, would blind it to the light of the sun.

"There came a hard, a terribly severe winter; there was a universal disease and mortality among the cattle all around the coast; it was not a simple ailment, such as I had seen before, and it baffled all my skill in simple, innoxious remedies. The evil that I could not cure I was accused of causing. The mortality among the cattle was laid at the witch's door, and all the other calamities that visited the people. As soon as the ball of scandal was set in motion, like the snowball, it accumulated at every turn. You must have heard of and remember all the rest. I was tried and condemned as a witch, and was only saved from hanging, and condemned to banishment, by the clemency of the judge. I was a witch, a declared witch by the highest tribunal of this land; I, whose only art was the gift of observation, whose only sorcery was a retentive memory.

"It is now ten years since I was banished from the fellowship of Christians, from the pale of civilization. Thank God, I was permitted to bring my only treasure with me, — my child and that faithful animal." The dog raised himself on his fore paws and looked wistfully in the witch's face; but finding he was not called, he reposed again. "The relations opposed no obstacle to my taking the child with me into banishment. It left them at full liberty to appropriate her property to themselves;

Digitized by Google

but before I came here, I visited the venerable men who first came to our island; through their influence I obtained a deed, by which the property was secured to Ruth. Am I uncharitable and cynical, think you? Ah! it was not my nature, as my unbounded trust in others, throughout my life, has proved; but experience has taught me the selfishness of the natural heart; and where the love of money has taken possession of a mind, the tender claims of family, of brother and sister, even nearer and tenderer relations, are forgotten.

"When the sentence of banishment was first passed, I knew not where to go; but accident, or rather a kind Providence, led me to this spot. I had always held kindly intercourse with the Indians; these wild children of nature discern and value simple gifts, and we had often compared our knowledge of simple remedies. They told me of this cabin, sheltered by the rock, that had been built by some Englishmen who were lost in the woods and obliged to pass the winter here. By the help of the Indians I had it repaired, and made it the comfortable dwelling you see. With my own hands I lined it with the bark of the white oak, which makes it warm in the winter and dry in the summer. The Indians never forsake me; they bring me corn and venison and fish, and I have never known want, but have always had food to spare to others; in return, they value my knowledge of the virtues of herbs and plants, in which, as in every thing else in nature, they believe dwells the Great Spirit. They honor me as a medicine-woman, or interpreter of this Great Spirit. I have been fed by Him who feedeth the ravens when they cry, and who fed Elijah in the desert. The smoke of my humble fire is seen, as it rises above the trees, by the Indian and by the houseless wanderer. My fire never goes out. The burning log is

Digitized by Google

buried at night, and renewed again at the earliest dawn, and its light shines through the forest at darkest midnight. Angels have blessed my unworthy roof-tree, but the Pharisee and the soul that is filled with spiritual pride turn away and pass on the other side."

"And the little Ruth," asked Naomi, "does she sleep under the weeping-willow in the forest?"

"For two years," continued the witch, — "she was just four years old when I was banished, — that dear child was the joy of my life. My cabin was no prison. She was the sunbeam that made the forest blossom like a garden. She made my days but one hour long, and the time that I slept seemed lost, for I could not then behold her beauty and gladness of heart. I had just counted her sixth birthday when she sickened. Strange as it may seem to you, my knowledge of simple remedies, which I had always employed with success, now failed; I was afraid to trust myself, my skill deserted me; my heart was too strong for my science; the intenseness of my anxiety robbed me of thought and memory. Had I, then, been proud of my knowledge, and was this to make me feel my ignorance? She faded and languished in my arms. Her feet and hands, like the purest marble, were streaked with blue veins, till at last she became all marble, and her eye, ever turned upon me in mute suffering, in silent love, closed for ever. Then darkness came over me, and the shadow of the grave. Many months passed, of which I have no recollection; they are a blank in my consciousness; but these months turned my head white, and made me older than my years. The Indians brought me food, and a kind old squaw prepared my babe for interment. A young Indian, that I had nursed when ill, with a delicacy none would expect from an Indian, travelled to Boston, and brought the weeping-willow, then a

Digitized by Google

sapling, — for he had observed that the whites planted such at their graves, — and planted it on the spot. 'The tree,' he said, 'should never forget to weep for the pale-face pappoose.' When I first looked upon that little grave, the soil was already green, and the stranger had taken root there and hung its pensile branches. The dog, they told me, had guarded it, sleeping every night stretched above the turf. I covered it with stones, and my faithful animal, knowing it was safe, returned to sleep at the cabin-door." The dog again raised himself, and uttered a low whine.

Naomi was deeply affected, but she had not a single word to offer. She was too simple and sincere in her sympathy to offer words of consolation, where she felt there was none, except in the resignation the narrator had already attained. She felt that it would have been mockery, almost an insult, to offer to that lofty being, mute in her wrongs, silent under the oppression of horrible injustice, words of common consolation. She looked at her with sentiments of reverence, almost of veneration. This noble creature, whose heart was full of the most generous and disinterested love, had accepted sacrifice and self-forgetfulness as her portion through life; this being, of woman's tenderest nature, had laid down, without a word of open regret, the dearest wish of woman's heart, to put on servitude and accept of exile in the cause of those she loved; this gifted intellect had bowed to ignorance and bigotry, and had been compelled to receive existence as a boon, although passed in solitude and isolation. "Ah!" thought Naomi, "such lofty, but lowly beings pass silently, unobtrusively, through life, while the Pharisee, the ranter, and the hypocrite have their ostentatious deeds blazoned upon their tombstones."

The dawn was crimson with an almost overpowering

Digitized by Google

glory when the travellers were again on their horses, and were waiting with Naomi's mare at the door of the cabin. Ruth awoke gay as the birds that sung at the same hour of dawn. She had lost all fear of the witch, and as she leaped to the pillion, behind her cavalier, she held out her hand, and insisted that the witch should tell her fortune. For the first time a smile stole over the features of the woman. "You will be happy," she said; and then, looking at Naomi, who had just mounted her horse, she added, "The rain rolls off from the bud, that breaks down the full-blown flower."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXIII.

I FEAR that I have wearied my readers by dwelling too long upon the history of the woman who was actually banished for witchcraft. It was, however, a feature of the age, and may be considered a prelude to the horrible tragedies that were afterwards acted upon nearly the same soil.

Our travellers continued their journey, without any unusual incidents, over what seemed to the ladies mountain paths, and along the borders of lakes and morasses, crossing and fording rivers, where the water came up to the stirrup-irons, or sometimes, as seemed far more dangerous to their inexperience, in an Indian birch-bark canoe. They became hardened to the fatigue ; to Naomi it was a perpetual pleasure to sit her horse all day, and lie down at night under the canopy of the sky. She forgot that danger and disgrace awaited the close of her long holiday. She became acquainted with all the aspects of nature, the forest, and its denizens. The agile and graceful deer, as they frequently started at the horses' hoofs, and darted across the forest paths, drew her delighted admiration. The Indian, observing this, caught, with a running noose of leather, a beautiful young doe, of a rich brown color shaded off into a delicate fawn. He intended to

Digitized by Google

lead her along till she became tame, and then give her, as a plaything, to Ruth. But she would not be led; she pined away with melancholy and fear, refused all food, and would often lie down and gaze at them with her melancholy eyes. She seemed to have human thoughts of bereavement and isolation from her fellows. Naomi bought her of the Indian in order to give her her liberty; but to this none of the party would consent; she was a fair prize, they said, and would yield them food and a beautiful doeskin as a trophy. God had given all animals to be for the use of man, said the elder; and to set free one that they had captured was a refinement of humanity beyond even the tenderly humane code of our fathers. The innocent creature, therefore, fell under the knife, fixing her tearful eyes in mute entreaty upon her butcher.

It is not my purpose, neither would it be in my power, to enter into a minute account of the whole of this journey to New Haven. Suffice it to say, that at the end of three weeks our travellers saw the blue waves of the Connecticut rolling before them. They left the gentleman who had hitherto been the cavalier of Ruth at Hartford, to be united to his bride, while the rest of the party, leaving a part of their horses and baggage, proceeded by water to New Haven. The ladies were received with the most paternal welcome, under the hospitable roof of the second Winthrop, a son of the first governor of Massachusetts, and second, as Cotton Mather says he could be, only to a Winthrop. He displayed for his guests all the charms of his conversation, and unfolded all the attractions of his philosophy and literature. He would fain have kept the ladies all winter, and would have been to them a most paternal guardian. Happy would it have been for Naomi had she yielded to the kind solicitations of his hospitality; but she was drawn by an invisible and unacknowledged,

Digitized by Google

but by an irresistible, attraction back to Boston. There was no magnetic telegraph in those days ; but Naomi was under a magnetic influence, and every pulsation of the air in the one place vibrated to the pulsations of her heart in the other. She could not consent to be left behind. They returned in the same vessel to Hartford, where the travellers again mounted their horses, and Naomi and her intelligent little horse became again, to their mutual joy, companions for the rest of the journey.

They had been detained much beyond the calculations of the wisest of their party. Their two voyages around the mouth of the river had been somewhat lengthened by contrary winds, and as they mounted their horses on the morning of the very last day of October, and a brisk wind from the north blew in their faces, they felt that it would be the extreme of imprudence to be longer dilatory. Naomi felt that she had too much seduced them to make the journey an excursion of pleasure. They had lingered on the way, attracted by scenes of sublimity and beauty that many of the party would never behold again. Their plan was now formed, that every day's journey should be a long one, and that they would neither turn aside nor be seduced to linger on their path.

After a few days of steady travel, they entered upon that beautiful season which the Catholics ascribe to the gift of St. Martin, but which we in the New World call the Indian summer. A light mist hung over the country, and every grand feature of the landscape was seen through a silver tissue-like haze, and the autumn sun looked, through the misty morning, like the full moon in August. They had again entered the forest, and though the progress of decay had made rapid steps, it seemed to Naomi to wear a more touching beauty than when the trees were arrayed in all that gorgeousness and pomp of color which

Digitized by Google

they wear in October. The oaks alone retained their faded regalia, but the forest paths were heaped with fallen leaves, and the whole surface of the ground shaded all over with every tint of brown and orange. A rich and vivid embroidery was spread over the fallen trunks, the decaying stumps, and the obtruding rocks, by creeping vines of vivid colors, that hung like decorations and fringes upon the deep green of the hemlocks and pines, intermixed with the dark foliage of the privet and the whortleberry, yet unchanged by the autumn. Flocks of silent birds fed upon the scarlet berries of the mountain-ash and the black alder, and troops of squirrels gathered up the fallen nuts.

The morning mists were dispersed at noonday, and the sunbeams, shining through the nearly naked branches, checkered the ground with twinkling light and shadow; but in deeply shaded spots the dew hung in fringes of mist upon the edges of the leaves. Scarcely a word was spoken by our travellers; the only sound was the measured and deadened tread of their horses' hoofs upon the paths, thick and heavy with fallen leaves. The woods were so still that the fluttering and falling of a leaf almost made the heart beat, and the spent winds, that had driven the ocean mountains high, and raged all along the coast, came to die away in the forest, just quivering the footstalk of an aspen-leaf. The forest seemed not to Naomi so deeply and darkly solemn as when covered with the umbrageous verdure of summer, where the sunbeam could scarcely penetrate; but it was filled with a tenderer and more touching beauty. The ancients built their temples in thick groves, in the radiance and glory of nature; but it seemed to Naomi that the worship of sorrow, as our religion has been called, was more appropriately placed in the stripped forest, where the sunbeam, like love, could penetrate, and soften decay.

Digitized by Google

Our party had now accomplished more than half of their homeward route. A few more days would place them again at their own firesides. Although in no degree wearied, they felt the necessity of despatch on account of the lateness of the season, and they allowed themselves but one hour at noon to refresh their beasts. This hour the Indian always marked with the truest precision, and although the elder consulted his watch, it was never so true as the instinct of the Indian.

The weather, that had hitherto been, though cold, yet serene and beautiful, became suddenly dark and lowering. The bank of clouds they had seen, whenever upon an eminence, reposing dark and threatening in the east and the south, began to unfold and roll up its heavy masses, till the whole atmosphere was covered with a leaden-colored veil. The wind, hitherto so hushed, now sobbed through the leafless branches, or suddenly whirled up the whole bed of leaves upon their path. The temperature had also changed; it had become damp and intensely chilling, and they all felt the necessity of a quicker motion to keep their blood in circulation. They hastened as much as the path would allow, silently and in single file, along the woods for miles, and as they came to an opening they saw the Indian before them on a little mound, observing intently the signs of the weather. When they came up, he held out his open palm, upon the horny skin of which a flake of snow was slowly melting, and pointed with the other to the lurid sky, now of a dense and uniform slate-color. Snow at the opening of November was not unusual, and in these early years of our history it sometimes fell to a great depth. The party began to feel that they had yielded to too many delays, although their journey until now had been eminently prosperous. The ladies gayly drew their hoods over their heads, and agreed

Digitized by Google

that a snow-storm would form an agreeable variety to their experience of the woods. It soon began to fall, in large, damp flakes, and the whole air was so filled, that it seemed as if ten thousand feather-beds had suddenly been emptied around them. As the snow descended, the atmosphere became soft and calm; the perpetual descent of the snow-flakes, falling, falling, and melting as they fell, produced almost a magical deception, as this thick fleece sunk away into the ground. At last white patches began to appear, varying the brown of the surface, till at length a perfect and spotless carpet of white covered the ground, and seemed for a short time to dispel the gloom of approaching night.

The snow, with noiseless industry, continued to weave thicker and thicker the warm blanket upon which their horses were treading, deadening the sound of their hoofs, except when they struck a protruding stone and the sudden flash was reflected upon the white surface. The breath of the horses condensed and hung in drops around their mouths; the hoods of the ladies clung in damp folds, and all seemed enveloped in a mysterious and shrouding drapery as the snow thickened and remained wherever it fell. The silence all around was deep and unbroken, except by the low and plaintive chirp of a bird, lost and seeking its fellows, or by a squirrel darting from one stone to another, faintly stirring the leaves beneath the snow, or by the neighing of one of their horses, which startled them as if it had been an unknown sound.

They had now again entered within the forest, and the snow, that upon the plain had been above the fetlocks of their horses, scarcely whitened the path; they went on, therefore, in comparative comfort; but the air became thicker and thicker; the darkness, also, was almost complete in the forest, and as they went on, single file, each

Digitized by Google

rider could only perceive the one that immediately preceded him. The air, too, as the night advanced, was piercing cold. Naomi's fingers were so sensible of its influence, that she could scarcely hold the reins; her horse, too, seemed nearly spent, and hardly capable of keeping along the file. The elder went to the head of the cavalcade, and kept the Indian by his side. The day's journey seemed so very long, that he became somewhat suspicious of the fidelity of their guide. They proceeded thus in unbroken silence, Naomi almost blinded by the snow that at every opening or vista was blown furiously against her, for the wind-storm had now arisen. She was obliged to keep her head uncovered, in order to see to guide her horse, although from fatigue and exhaustion she was scarcely able to keep upon the saddle. Ruth, wrapped comfortably in her fur cloak and hood, had only to hold fast by the belt of the servant before her. It was so long since she had spoken, that Naomi, believing she had fallen asleep, sent forward her scarf, and directed the servant to pass it around Ruth and fasten it to his own belt, so that no accident could loosen her hold of this support. The newly married clerk did the same by his young wife, and thus they travelled on in greater security.

Their goal for the night was a woodman's log-cabin, where they had passed a night on their outward way, and the day's ride had been so long and wearisome that all began to fear the Indian had misled them. They recollected that they must first ford a stream, and as they descended a hill they heard the sound of rushing water. They descended the bank, and soon perceived that the stream was immensely swollen, the stepping-stones entirely lost, and the stream only visible in the intense darkness by the flashing of the waves.

Their situation now was one of real distress, especially

Digitized by Google

for the ladies. The men could have found means for fording the stream, but to the three ladies, with their long and heavy drapery, it was really an enterprise attended with danger. While they stood, dismounted and clinging to their horses, they perceived through the murky night the glimmering of two lights upon the opposite bank, that seemed moving about as though searching for the ford. A halo had gathered round the torches, but there was a large and bright reflection, showing the skeleton branches and stems of the trees, and that two men stood also upon the bank. They each led a horse by the bridle, and were looking for the best place to swim their horses across the stream. Their blazing torches of resinous pine threw a strong light upon our group of travellers, collected on the bank, and presenting a most picturesque scene, — the dark and swollen stream, rushing between its whitened banks, over which hung the drooping and skeleton trees, also loaded with snow, and the group of dismounted travellers ; the fatigued horses standing with hanging heads and loosened rein ; Naomi's face marble-white with anxiety and fatigue, as she leant against and clung to the mane of her horse, the poor beast leaning its head in mute sympathy against hers, its glossy black coat spotted with snow and mud.

The relief they felt at this most unlooked-for succour filled their hearts with grateful joy. One of the party proposed that they should on the very spot offer up their devout thanksgiving, for the two young men had already swam the swollen stream, and stood with their horses amid the weary group. Naomi felt her heart beat quick, and swell with a secret, but intense joy, when she saw that one of them was Herbert Walton, attended by a friend and classmate. Two other men now came up, with torches, and, as the safest ford was found, they prepared

Digitized by Google

to cross. Herbert had already pressed to Naomi's side ; with earnest warmth, he was urging her to alight, for they had again mounted their horses, and to allow him and his friend to carry her across. She thought her own faithful but wearied and drooping mare would as usual serve her faithfully, and steadily refused his request ; but she consented at last to take his own horse, which was quite fresh, having travelled but two miles this evening, and the saddles were quickly exchanged. Naomi expected to see Herbert mount her own poor brute, but he gave the rein to one of the men, and placed himself at the head of her horse ; no urging would induce him to mount, and, as he could not avail himself of the stepping-stones, he was soon above his waist in the swollen stream, holding the head of her horse and guiding him gently along. This act of devotion seemed to Naomi too great for her to accept ; it sank deeply into her heart, exciting a secret, but fervent joy, mingled also with regret and fear, and an emotion of timid and self-deprecatory humility. The sensitive can understand what it is not easy to describe, — that feeling of humility, that shrinking from love, as too great a bliss, that feeling of unworthiness to accept a gift so disproportioned to our deserts. These thoughts crowded upon Naomi, and when she spoke, her words were mingled with tears.

As for Herbert, he felt an unmingled joy. He was near, he was protecting, her who was to him the most precious object on this earth. What was the water ? — he felt it not ! With wings at his heart, at his head, he was passing through the downy atmosphere of love. He was near her ; his right hand was placed in hers, while with the left he held the rein close to the horse's head ; he felt her breath upon his cheek ; a false step of the horse, and she must have fallen into his arms. What

Digitized by Google

then to him was night, or wet, or cold? He could have measured kingdoms thus in her service, nor felt a sense of weariness or want. Such is love in the season of generous youth. Its wings are strong; they are also white and unspotted. No selfish, impure, or ignoble thought can sully the pure swan's-down of first love.

The party had nearly all passed the ford, and were mounting their horses again. Herbert still held Naomi's rein, but she was looking around, anxious to see Ruth approach her, when a fearful shriek was heard close behind her. There was instantly the greatest confusion; all rushed to the bank again, and when the torches were collected in one spot, poor Ruth was seen, borne down by her heavy garments, and struggling with the swollen waters. It was but the work of a second. Herbert rushed to her; the water had scarcely penetrated through her thick riding-dress when he bore her in his arms up the bank. She was unused to sitting a horse alone, but it was necessary in fording the river that her horse should be led, and thus she was left alone upon the man's saddle. Ruth, numbed by cold and over-fatigued, had lost her hold, and slipped from the horse into the river as he climbed the bank.

Although Naomi could neither have foreseen nor prevented the accident, she could scarcely forgive herself that she had not asked Herbert to leave her and protect Ruth. She felt that perhaps, absorbed in her new joy, she had for a moment forgotten her sister. For the remainder of the short ride to the woodman's cabin, she kept Ruth at her side. Herbert would not quit her rein, but walked the short distance before her. Every heart was sobered and every mind thoughtful. Ruth had been rescued from a terrible danger, and all had received signal mercies. When the party reached the woodman's cot-

Digitized by Google

tage, and could look into each other's faces by the brilliant light of the pine fire, there could be seen on each countenance various and deep emotions.

Herbert, as he looked at Naomi and saw that open mirror of feeling, radiant with an angelic expression which seemed only the reflection of deeper emotions than those of gratitude, thought he read there the bliss of his whole future life. The stern Puritans were some of them moved even to tears, and that night there was no mere formal prayer from pious lips alone; the heart poured out its deep thankfulness in fervent words, and in silent tears, wrung from the deep fountains of the heart.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE woodman's cottage where our travellers were now sheltered was not noticed in the first part of the journey. Although in the midst of woods, it stood upon the very verge of civilization, and after this night the travellers would find comfortable resting-places, however rude, till they reached Boston. The woodman possessed the patriarch's blessing, a house well filled with sons and daughters. He and his sturdy boys gained their living by thinning the forests all around, and in the winter, after the welcome snows descended, sledding the wood to the Boston market.

The rain during the night had again become a heavy snow; and when our travellers looked out in the morning, as far as the eye could reach was one unbroken surface of dazzling white. The heavy leaden-colored clouds were indeed drawing off, and here and there were streaks of delicate blue between; but a foot's depth of damp, watery snow lay upon the ground, and the air was intensely chilly and cold.

When Naomi descended, early in the morning, from the loft, where her sleep had been unbroken, she found the men of the party in deep consultation. She was struck with the gravity of Herbert's countenance, which,

Digitized by Google

however, as soon as she entered, was radiant with joy. They had been consulting about the best way of proceeding. There was, indeed, but one way in which the ladies could travel with comfort; that was, for the woodman's team and oxen to be sent forward to break a path through the snow. It was afterwards arranged that the stronger portion of the party should precede the ladies, who would bring up the rear upon a well-broken path.

As soon as a moment occurred when Herbert could speak to Naomi unobserved, he informed her, with as much delicacy and caution as possible, that the escape of Margaret was known immediately after she came away; and that it had been impossible to conceal from the officers who were employed in the matter the active part she had taken in the escape. "And," he added, in a low and tremulous voice, fearful lest he should alarm her too suddenly, "they are only waiting for your return to act with the utmost rigor."

Naomi neither fainted nor wept. She looked steadily at Herbert. "It is only what I expected," she said; "and I am certainly obliged to the gentlemen that they have suffered me to take this pleasant journey through the forest, instead of obliging me to spend the beautiful Indian summer shut up within the walls of a prison."

"As soon as I had the least intimation of their design," continued Herbert, "I made an excuse for accompanying my college chum into the woods, for a few days' hunting — (I must carry home a deer or two). Of course, I would not even tell Faith, lest something should be suspected; and my friend David thinks at this moment that our meeting with you last evening was wholly accidental."

Naomi looked her thanks, — she even took his hand; but that look was so eloquent, that Herbert forgot he had done any thing, and was trying to think what he *could* do, to deserve such a grateful smile.

Digitized by Google

"But," said he, "all will be of no avail unless you turn aside and remain in Providence, or anywhere but Boston. Let me use the influence of a brother, — let me be to you the voice of your mother, and beg you not to set foot in Boston. You do not know, you cannot understand, the danger you are running into."

Herbert had spoken so earnestly, that the tears stood in his eyes.

"It is too late," said Naomi; "I know no one in Providence. I could, indeed, go to the ever-open door, — to the hospitable roof of Roger Williams; but the journey would be as hazardous as to go back to Connecticut."

"There are other places," said Herbert. "My sister, — O, how happy would be my sister to receive you, and how honored would be our humble roof if you would dwell there a few days!"

Herbert's face and brow had become crimson; but as Naomi shook her head, as though such a step were out of the question, he became pale and agitated.

"I thank you," said Naomi; "but I feel the need of returning to my step-father's roof. Treacherous protection as it may be to me, yet there is my proper place, and there is Faith, my best friend. I must meet the charge, too; that is inevitable. I am not guilty, certainly, to Him who reads the heart; and we must not tremble before the judgments of men."

Naomi had no one to consult. She instinctively shrank from accepting the solitary escort of Herbert, and she could not make a confidant of the elder, and ask him to divide the party, so that one part could guard her to a place of safety. The witch's cabin occurred to her; but, although it was invested with a sort of romance from the witch's heart-rending narrative, she felt that it would be

Digitized by Google

the most dreary of retreats from danger. No ; she must return to her home. She felt the need of being under a kindred roof, step-father although he might prove to her. She felt the want of the sympathy, the firm and courageous advice, of Faith. She needed only to look into her hopeful eyes, to hear the cheerful ringing of her musical voice, to feel strong and firm. Yes, she would return, if the next day she must flee again. Resolutely, therefore, she mounted her favorite, now refreshed and alert as ever. The offence she had committed was, in her view of it, a sacred duty ; and she was ready to take the consequences, — to defend it, or to bear the penalty.

Naomi would not allow her anxieties to throw a cloud over the party ; they proceeded, therefore, gayly on their course, feeling, as all do at the end of a long journey, that home is more precious than ever. Indeed, it is said that the horses even always rejoice when they are returning to Boston ; and that the crooked streets, the broken and uneven pavements, are a very Mohammed's paradise to them.

The sun came out and turned the landscape to fairy-land, and hung a glittering jewel on every branch, and adorned the withered forests, like dowagers, with coronets of diamonds.

Herbert rode, whenever the path would admit two, by the side of Naomi. The service he had rendered to both the sisters seemed to entitle him to that place, and although, when the elder rode up, he gave way and fell into the rear, yet the moment there was room to pass, his horse, restless in every other position, pushed forward, and was instantly quiet and steady by the side of Naomi. This excited the observation and the mirth of the company, and many dry Puritan jokes were uttered, with almost the same disastrous effect as attended the one joke of Douce Davie Deans.

Digitized by Google

Naomi observed with pain that Ruth did not join in the mirth ; that she rode, pale, silent, and tearful, behind her cavalier, and took no part in the gayety that the beautiful day and the numerous company and the prospect of returning to Boston seemed to excite. She thought, perhaps, that she had suffered from her plunge in the river, and she would not draw the attention of the others upon her unusual taciturnity.

Naomi called, and requested the man behind whom she was placed to keep as near as possible to her. She wished to have her under her immediate care, to watch whether it were illness that made her so unusually sad. But this was impossible while Herbert's horse contended perpetually for the place next to Naomi. A bright thought occurred to Herbert, that he should take Ruth on a pillion behind himself ; he would thus have another reason to keep his place in the cavalcade, that Ruth might be near her sister.

Under such circumstances, thrown as it were into intimate relations with each other, and Naomi unable to withdraw from his protecting side, delicacy forbade, even if timidity would have allowed, him to speak distinctly of that which filled his whole being, — that trembled in his voice, radiated from the depths of his eye, and wrapped his whole person in the garment of joy. Naomi felt its influence. There was no need of speech ; their hearts spoke to each other. They felt that, in the whole universe attuned by God to the blessed influences of love, their hearts, like two perfect musical instruments, answered to each other, trembled with the same touch, and vibrated to the same sacred breath.

Nothing occurred to interrupt or retard the safe arrival of our travellers at their homes. Naomi's danger had been whispered among the party, and, in order to excite

Digitized by Google

as little attention as possible, they returned, not in company, but by twos and threes to Charlestown and to Watertown; some of them, and among these Naomi and Ruth, left their horses at Charlestown, and crossed the ferry to Boston. They entered their father's house just at nightfall, when the family supper had been removed, and the Bible placed on the table for the evening worship. Natural feeling, with our fathers, was so entirely subjected to the daily forms of religion, to the letter of the law, that the evening prayers were finished before any questions were asked. The prayer, that had been offered every night for the safety of the wandering lambs of the little flock, was turned into a thanksgiving for their happy return. Naomi and Ruth joined their sweet voices in the hymn, and at the last line Ruth turned towards her father, and Naomi threw herself into the arms of Faith.

While relating, with lively interest, the details of their journey, Naomi observed the uneasiness of Mr. Aldersey, and the anxiety that rested with so deep and unusual a shade of seriousness upon the countenance of Faith. She said, interrupting her account of the witch, — "I already know that I am in danger. Tell me the extent of it, that I may be prepared to meet it."

Mr. Aldersey now looked at her with so stern and penetrating a glance, that Naomi felt her face glow, even to the temples. Faith instantly interposed, and asked so many questions of Ruth, that Naomi regained her composure, and met her step-father's searching looks with a pure and open brow, where no infirmity of purpose changed the pale ivory of her cheek.

The young girls had not yet put off their heavy and travel-stained habits. They had thrown off their hats, and Faith was regarding with a look of pity, mingled a little with contempt, the broken and drenched feather of

Digitized by Google

Naomi's hat, and the limp and faded bow upon Ruth's, when a heavy knock was heard upon the front door. Faith started ; her dark complexion became intensely sallow, and a deep pale circle formed beneath each eye; instead of fainting, such is the effect of fear upon strong, but intensely feeling natures. Mr. Aldersey looked uneasily at the parlour-door, for he had heard Sambo go to open the outward one. Naomi and Ruth were both carelessly unconcerned. They were soon aware of a dispute at the door. They heard Sambo say that he was sure he did not know, — he could not tell, — he did not believe, not he, that Miss Omai had got home, — he did not s'pose she would come home under a week. When she did get back, he would send for the gentlemen.

Mr. Aldersey rose and threw open the parlour-door. Instantly the officers of the law entered. The warrant that they held in their hand was perfectly in order, and had been signed more than a month. Naomi must yield herself that very night, weary as she was, to the unsleeping vigilance of justice. What a heavy weight fell upon the hearts of all in that little circle! Mr. Aldersey felt a proud and indignant anger, that he should be suspected of harbouring a Quaker under his roof, and repelled the charge with scorn. He would have scorned, had he known it, to have held under his roof one who had presumed to aid the accursed sect.

Faith, who had hitherto met every thing with cheerful trust, was, for a moment, completely subdued. Naomi rose above them all. She surrendered herself with humility, but with a fortitude that would fain revive the hearts of her friends. The only indulgence allowed the weary prisoner was to change her dress before she accompanied the officer to the jail.

It may excite some surprise in my readers that Naomi,

Digitized by Google

so lovely and so interesting as she is represented, should have found no powerful friend, no warm advocate, among the young and ingenuous people of Boston, to come forward at this time and espouse her cause. It must be recollected that she had been scarcely a year in Boston, and a third of that time had been passed in travelling to Connecticut. It is true, the young Puritans, the beaux of the period, always cast furtive glances at Naomi at church, and observed every change in her dress or deportment; and when they met each other, one said, — "I have seen her"; another, — "I have bowed to her." Staring, as it is now practised, would have been deemed so indecorous and irreverent, that it might have subjected the young man to a seat upon the pulpit-stairs. Mr. Aldersey never invited young men to his house, and the only opportunities they had of seeing her were those which the Sunday and the Thursday Lecture afforded. Then the young men took care to follow as closely behind her as possible, and pause at her father's door till it was closed.

In their convivial hours, — for even then the young Puritans had their convivial hours, — the conversation was of Aldersey's step-daughter; and bets were laid that they would beard the bear in his den, and woo or carry off the daughter. Whoever has read the annals or the sermons of the period has found most fearful lamentations over the degeneracies and backslidings of the young men of the day. They were probably the lamentations of the old, who had forgotten their own youth. Ah! while there are meetings of the young, there will be "cakes and ale"; and while there are colleges for the young, there will be bonfires.

Naomi, also, could not give herself up to those expansive feelings that excite warm sympathy from others of

Digitized by Google

her own sex. She was conscious of a secret, — of carrying about within her inmost heart a secret so grave, that, if it had been known, it might have subjected her to the horrible fate of Mary Dyer. Although she was the soul of benevolence, and ready for every kindly feeling, this consciousness of being not exactly what she seemed imparted a species of reserve to her manners that prevented the young women of Boston society from clinging closely to her.

But Naomi was young and courageous. No deep sorrows had drunk up and drained the springs of hope within her. She had never passed through the dry and burning paths of life, where at every step some hope withers, some support falls away. She stood upon the morning elevations of life, looking upon the sunny paths around. Happy are those who meet with sorrow in early life, when the courage is high, the hopes all bright, and the inexperience of the world has as yet revealed no coldness, no selfish-hearted friends, who turn their footsteps from the unfortunate, and leave them to solitude and anguish !

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXV.

"Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for an hermitage."

THE Boston jail was at this time a small and inconvenient building, situated in what is now Court Street. It was already crowded with the people called Quakers; some of them treated with extreme rigor, having their legs chained to heavy logs of wood, and obliged at every step to drag after them a formidable weight. Prisoners of both sexes were crowded together in the common apartment, thus encouraging each other in their fanatical excitement and frequently blasphemous imprecations against the government, the religion, and the ministers. Their ravings attracted so often the attention and the sympathy of the passers-by, that the past year a high wall had been built all around the jail, rendering it still more gloomy to the inmates.

Naomi had the good fortune to be placed in a very small room by herself. It was an attic, with a small gable window with diamond panes. It did not admit a fireplace, but she could endure any degree of cold to enjoy the luxury of privacy and retirement from the common room. Naomi was humble, and perhaps, in comparing

Digitized by Google

herself with her fellow-creatures, she was too lowly in her self-esteem; yet from the refinement of her tastes, and the beautiful purity of all her thoughts, she shrank from the contact of daily intercourse with the ignorant and the vulgar. The soul of benevolence and of loving-kindness, she yet felt keenly all that offended the purity of her mind in low ideas and vulgar expressions. The Quakers, especially the females, as I have said before, who came to this country, were of a low order of intellect, and extremely illiterate. The principle of their religion flattered self-esteem and fostered spiritual pride, and gave to their deportment an offensive degree of arrogance and contempt for others; while, then, among them she was not of them. Naomi, although she differed altogether from the orthodox church, held nothing in common with the Quakers of that day but the essential principle of their faith, the belief of the inward voice of truth in the soul; this she held above all other inspiration, — to be obeyed and honored as the voice of God, — obeyed rather than the authority of any church, were it the church of the bishops, or the church of the elders. She adopted none of the peculiarities of the Quakers; she *thee-d* and *thou-ed* no one. Her dress differed only from the reigning fashion by its more tasteful simplicity; she had too true an eye for beauty to wear the superfluous flounces and ribbons, or the whalebones "that imprisoned English women in the French cages" of the day, as described by the "Simple Cobbler of Agawam." Naomi did not feel, indeed, that magnanimous contempt which the cobbler expresses for such devotees to fashion, as to call them "the very gizzard of a trifle, the product of a quarter of a cipher, the epitome of nothing, fit only to be kicked." But she knew better than to break the pure alabaster of her throat with strings of beads; and to have adorned herself with

Digitized by Google

the exaggerated ornaments of the mode would have been to hang jewels upon a pure marble statue.

As soon as her bed was arranged, Naomi went to her little cell. There, seated by the table, with her head bent over her arms, she gave herself up to reflection upon the melancholy reality of her situation. She was alone; was she not also friendless? She had, indeed, no friend upon whose aid she could count. She felt no confidence in the will or the power of her step-father to stand by her with his friendship, or to shield her with his protection. She was too single-minded herself to attribute to him selfish views with regard to her property; but she was not yet of age, and of course, in case of her death, whatever was not secured in England would fall into his hands. She knew well that he had not the moral courage to defend her against the tide of public opinion. He was too orthodox a member of the church, too stern a Puritan, to feel any sympathy for a heretic; and should she lose the odor of the true faith in the nostrils of elders and church-members, she would become as offensive as carrion to the sanctimonious taste of her step-father.

To the reader unacquainted with the history and opinions of the times, the idea that holding a particular religious faith could wither and blast the whole character of a young woman must appear unintelligible. But it must be understood that the ministers, the elders, and the church-members were the fashionable circle of the time; they were the *élite* of the whole people; they formed the tribunal of public opinion; to lose caste with them was to lose every thing; there was no class of worldly people to fall back upon; whoever was not a devout church-member, whoever was not exemplary at church, at church-meetings, and at prayers, — to use the words of another, which can be scarcely deemed profane, whoever did not

Digitized by Google

" Snuff his candle with a prayer,
And with a prayer wind up his watch,
And go to prayer at striking of the clock,"

was looked upon with suspicion, as losing favor in the fashionable circle; as would be, at the present day, a fashionable belle, if suspected of attending the Methodist or the Millerite meetings.

Faith, although she would have defended and even have given her life for her favorite, had no influence in the circle that formed the public opinion. Believing in her heart that Naomi was as true a believer, and nearer to the kingdom of the angels, than many of those who prayed openly ten times a day, yet, if called upon to give her testimony, she could not say that Naomi was exemplary in the outward forms of piety. She knew well that that pure and humble heart beat ever with the pulses of prayer, but she saw no lengthened countenance, and witnessed no bended knee. There was another heart that would have poured out the ruddy tide that circled round it to save her; but any exertion of his would have tended to injure rather than to aid her cause. The blossom of hope and love, that had just begun to open its petals for them, must be buried under the dry leaves of the old withered forests of Jewish and Hebrew forms, or crushed upon the sterile rocks of orthodoxy, like those lovely little blossoms that open their delicate beauty upon the granite of the mountain. Ah! she was alone, defenceless, a lamb among wolves.

So entirely was Naomi overwhelmed with the desolateness of her position, that morning dawned, gray and cheerless, upon the bars of her prison-window before she lifted her head from her folded arms; then, shivering, completely chilled by the night, she laid herself, dressed

Digitized by Google

as she was, upon the bed, and sought oblivion from depressing thought in the friendly arms of sleep.

Forlorn as Naomi felt herself to be, she was even more friendless than she herself knew. There was a bitterness of public opinion against her, of which she was as ignorant as the plant that is blighted by the noxious vapor that circles in the air about its tender blossom, and, like the delicate character of a woman, is blighted before it fades. During her absence on the journey to Connecticut, slanders had arisen, and, like the snowball, gathered strength and size as they rolled on. We must go back to say that the mildest and most liberal of the church had passed away to their reward. The state of religious sentiment had changed in Boston in the thirty years since the persecution of Mrs. Hutchinson. The earliest emigrants recognized the right of private judgment in religion ; and at the time of her persecution there was found to be a party of liberal-minded persons in the church, so that her banishment was obtained by only one vote. But the evil that had arisen from this division in the church had been so deep a scandal to the godly, that a reaction had taken place, and the strictest rein of orthodoxy had never since been relaxed by magistrate or minister.

As none but church-members were freemen of the State, none but church-members could take any part in the administration of the government, or hold even the lowest office ; and as none could be church-members but such as the ministers approved, their influence extended to all the minutiæ of private life, — bore upon the private happiness of every individual. No broken-down victim of misfortune could hold the office of bell-ringer, no unlucky vagrant could enjoy the privilege of herding swine, without the consent of the ministers. The ministers governed public opinion ; and orthodoxy, to the church and

Digitized by Google

to the ministers of the church, was the test of character. As I said before, during Naomi's absence slanders had gathered against her sufficient to overwhelm her. Besides strong suspicions against the orthodoxy of her opinions, and conjectures about the kind of heresy she entertained, there was enough in her practice to condemn her. It was whispered that she did not attend the morning prayers of her father's family. It was said that she was rarely seen at the Thursday Lecture, — that she had been met walking upon the Neck during the hours of the weekly Lecture ; they even asserted that she had been seen upon the western side of Beacon Hill before the disk of the sun was below the horizon on a Sunday evening, and also after it had entirely sunk on the evening preceding the Sabbath. She was, indeed, a member of the church, but she had given no express manifestation by outward act that she was in a state of grace ; by a particular favor, the relation of her religious experience had been dispensed with when she joined the church ; her conversation — at least with mere acquaintances — was never upon religious subjects ; and she did not follow with reverential humility the footsteps of the ministers, as in Catholic countries the women kiss the hem of the garments of the priests.

These were the slanders that, in her absence, had been whispered from ear to ear, and carried from house to house ; so completely a character like Naomi's could remain unrecognized by the little circle around her ! Indeed, unassuming and humble characters like hers live unknown in all societies ; their beautiful simplicity and heavenly-mindedness are known only to the eye of Omniscience, loved only by the angels, unless some pure-hearted saint like Faith is able to penetrate the veil of humility, and stamp upon her own heart " the daily beauty " of such a life.

Digitized by Google

The arrest of Naomi was a thunderbolt to her step-father. His nervous and fretful anxiety lest he should himself fall under the censure of public opinion kept him in a state of perpetual restlessness. His selfishness cut off all hope of aid from him; he was rather, in his own opinion, himself the object of sympathy and commiseration; his house had been tainted with heresy, and he went about wearing the crown and sceptre of martyrdom.

At the dawn of day, Faith was at the prison-door. She was early admitted, and bent over Naomi with an encouraging smile when she woke from that uneasy sleep in which we left her. Naomi blessed that faithful friend, in whom there was no change; no crust of bigotry or spiritual pride shut the honest heart from her view; and Faith, as she looked into those clear eyes and down into that pure heart, saw the same unconscious simplicity, the same transparent truth, that could stoop neither to subterfuge nor to mental reservation.

The ministers wore grave and anxious faces. It was one of their own flock that had gone astray; and it was not a time in the church when there was more rejoicing over one that was found than over ninety-and-nine that had never gone astray. Naomi was one of their own lambs, her step-father one of the pillars of the church; but the more painful the duty, the more were the hearts of many fixed to purge the church from the offence, even if it were to pluck out the right eye and cast it from them.

No words can paint the agony of these days to Herbert Walton. Restless, unable to think but of her, breathing at every breath a prayer or a curse from his deepest heart, he wandered back and forth, day and night, from his home to the street where stood the prison, — like the mother bird around the nest where lie all her hopes, beating her restless wings to save them from the hawk, power-

Digitized by Google

less to save, yet frantic to lose, almost wishing for the worst, that the suspended agony might crush at once his uncertainties and fears. To vivid, impatient natures, "suspense is hell." Herbert was stretched upon the rack, waiting for the slow dawn of the winter's day, to rush into Boston, to wander through the streets, and fix his eyes upon the narrow window of Naomi's cell, and to hasten, as soon as the shades of the early winter evening gathered over the little town, to catch the first ray of that small taper that was lighted within her prison.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVI.

" Rich he was, of holy thought and work,
He was also a learnèd man, a clerk,
That Christès Gospel trewely wolde preach;
His parishens devoutly would he teach;
Benign he was, and wondrous diligent,
And in adversity full patient." — CHAUCER.

THE evening was dark and stormy, — a winter evening in the month of December. The day had been fair, — a Thursday, the day of the market and Lecture, — and, as the sleighing was good, — the first steady sleighing of the season, — the little town of Boston had been unusually animated. Sleighs and sleds had been passing through the main street the whole day, and until late in the evening; but it was now seven o'clock, and quiet and order reigned throughout all the crooked and intricate lanes of the little town. The doors and windows were closed, and families gathered around to listen to the voice of prayer.

At the Thursday Lecture that day, Mr. Wilson and Mr. Norton had invited the ministers of the neighbouring towns to remain all night, and to meet at the study of the Rev. Mr. Wilson, to discuss a matter of church discipline. Naomi was amenable to the discipline of the church, as was every one who joined that body; and al-

Digitized by Google

though in her case the recounting of religious experiences had been dispensed with, yet she had signed the church covenant, and thus submitted herself to "the watch and ward" of that body.

Let me introduce my readers to a commodious house, at the corner of what is now called Wilson's Lane. The house stood in the midst of a garden and an orchard, and was flanked on either side by commodious barns and out-houses. The snow lay heavy upon the branches of the apple and plum trees, and, although it was well worn in the adjoining market-place by country sleds, it lay in all its virgin whiteness in the orchard and garden; the stumps of the last year's corn, not yet removed, just appearing above its sparkling surface.

In a back room of this house, — the study of the Rev. Mr. Wilson, — the ministers and elders were about assembling. Two small candles cast little light upon their anxious faces; but the chimney, built when the forests were all standing, was now heaped with glowing logs, and diffused that flickering and uncertain fire-light, now rising into brilliancy, and now sinking into shadow, which, thrown upon the human countenance, makes it an enigma to read. The broad brick hearth, polished with use, was of a glowing red, and was covered thickly with the white floating ashes of the hickory logs. Two enormous and-irons, with the heads and feet of grotesque animals, supported these logs. An oaken cabinet, curiously carved in coarse workmanship, stood on one side of the room. Upon its front were carved Adam and Eve in Paradise, with the serpent presenting an apple to Eve, so much larger than her own head, that it would almost seem to suggest the idea that it would serve for all her posterity, and thus transmit the transgression. On the other side of the room was arranged upon shelves the library of the rever-

Digitized by Google

end divine; great folios of divinity, ponderous volumes of the fathers of the church, and the heathen classics, in white parchment bindings, stood side by side. The venerable authors of some of the books of divinity, such as Owen and Baxter, hung in richly-wrought ebony frames against the wall. Two other engravings were also suspended upon opposite walls. The coarse and hardy portrait of Oliver Cromwell frowned opposite to the sad and melancholy representation of him who was afterwards called the Martyr. There were very few modern books; I mean books of that age, now ancient to us. It was a rare and priceless treasure when a vessel from the mother country brought out a thin quarto, or a pamphlet, just from the press. Such a treasure the Rev. Mr. Wilson had lately received; a thin quarto lay open upon the table, — "Poems by John Milton." This volume contained The Mask of Comus, L' Allegro, and Il Penseroso, and some Latin poems.* Mr. Wilson was a poet himself; the book had completely enchanted him, but he had laid it aside when his brethren began to assemble, as a trifling study, irrelevant to the cause of their coming together.

As the black-cassocked gentlemen dropped in, the slight scraping of feet upon the white, sanded floor was audible. The chairs were all filled, and one of the brethren approached the table, and turned over the leaves of the new quarto. "See," said he, with a slight smile, to another, "with what studies our spiritual father amuses his precious hours."

The other looked at the title-page. "The most delightful book," he said, "that the century has produced. I have read it. The poems are by the late secretary of Cromwell."

"And now a poor, blind schoolmaster," said the oth-

* Paradise Lost had not yet been written.

Digitized by Google

er, "saved from the scaffold by the act of oblivion of our blessed king."

A slight smile and shrug passed round the room.

"The renowned Latin secretary of Oliver Cromwell," said Mr. Wilson. "But I venture to predict that he will not be remembered in future ages for that distinction, but as the most renowned poet in the English tongue."

"There is another poet," said a young man present, "that I love better than the stern Roundhead. He, too, was imprisoned for his loyalty. In old Westminster he composed some of his sweetest poems." And the young man repeated, —

"Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for an hermitage.

"If I have freedom in my love,
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone, that soar above,
Enjoy such liberty."

"There," said he, "can you match in simplicity and beauty such lines as these?"

Mr. Wilson said that these were lines simply beautiful; but that in Milton there were lines full of deep thought, and of a sublimity of expression that could not be surpassed in Homer.

The other said, Homer was the poet of all ages, while Milton was only a Puritan, a sectarian, and a bitter enemy, he acknowledged, to all tyranny.

"Well," said Mr. Wilson, "John Milton, as you will see, will be the poet of all ages and of all nations."

"We shall hardly live to see it," said the other, laughing.

"No," said Mr. Wilson; "but we shall see him take his place with the greatest of poets."

Digitized by Google

Mr. Wilson's prophecy was not fulfilled so soon as he expected ; but, considering that the Paradise Lost was not then published, the prophecy itself may be considered remarkable.

All had now arrived who were expected. They had met for consultation upon a point of church authority and discipline, and to seek the Divine aid in prayer. It was evident, from the anxiety and gravity of their countenances, that a weight of responsibility rested upon their minds. The question before them was, whether Naomi, being one of the church, subject to watch and ward from them, should be withdrawn from the civil authority, and subjected to examination and censure of the church (for the ministers never doubted their power to withdraw her), or be suffered to take her trial with the others, and afterwards subjected to the church examination and censure.

Wilson, being the oldest among them, was expected to lead their deliberations. The venerable old man was now for the most lenient measures. The loss of his children and his lovely grandchildren had deeply touched and softened his heart. His opinion was decidedly that she should be withdrawn from the civil prosecution, and be let off with a spiritual, but not too severe, admonition from the church. The old man was almost alone in this advice. Many were for the severest proceedings. They pleaded that there were great backslidings in the church. God would soon enter into judgment with them on account of their degeneracy from the piety of their fathers. The magistrates had lately issued a letter to all the churches in the land, calling upon them for a more intense devotion, a return to their first love, — to repent of their coldness and lukewarmness ; and, under the circumstances, the case of Naomi seemed to be thrown exactly before them, to try and prove their sincerity. Here was a young woman be-

Digitized by Google

longing to one of the first families in the colony, rich, and supposed to possess many powerful friends. Now it was urged that there should be no respect of persons ; a stern regard to duty should be with the church paramount to all claims of friendship or family. They should hate father and mother, brother and sister, lover and friend, for the cause of God and the church.

John Norton here interposed, with his deep voice and stern expression. It was not worth while, he said, to be hypocrites, and to give themselves credit for a zeal for the church which they did not possess. For his part, he thought John Aldersey's step-daughter, meek as she seemed, held dangerous opinions, and had wit enough to conceal them. He had thought so from the very first day he saw her. She was likely to give them a good deal of trouble, and therefore he was for the severest measures of the civil court. Let her be banished, he said, and that as soon as possible, lest they should one day be tempted to hang her for her wit, as they did Mrs. Hibbins.

This remark of Norton's seemed to change the character of the discussion. Every one had some story to tell, some remark to repeat that had been attributed to Naomi, and all of a nature to disparage the ministers and the New England church. They were all of them false, or greatly exaggerated ; they were the gossip of the day, — words put into Naomi's mouth that her tongue had never uttered ; but they served to remove her from the sympathies of the kindest hearts there, and to obtain a unanimous vote afterwards that the ministers should make no effort to shelter her from the severity of the civil tribunal, but let justice take its course.

One or two of the younger brethren now ventured to raise their voices. They were young men, and they had been touched by the meekness and beauty of Naomi's

Digitized by Google

appearance. Could there not be a remonstrance presented to the magistrates against any severe or brutal measures in the case of Naomi ? they asked. The country, they said, would bear no more scourgings, or brandings with a hot iron. Besides, what had she in fact done ? She had performed an act of humanity, from a motive of gratitude ; and could they punish that without disgracing themselves ?

This was not the question, said Mr. Norton ; it was her opinions, not her acts, that they had to do with. He would gladly, if it were possible, separate the one from the other, — commend her humanity, and curse her heresy. He would have burned the one, and cherished the other.

Like Isabella, when she sanctioned the Inquisition, and Paul, when he slew and imprisoned the first Christians, the ministers verily thought they were doing God service.

Just as they had come to the conclusion that leniency must be dispensed with in the case of Naomi, a knock was heard at the door, and one of their clerical brethren, a young man well known to them, entered. He had that moment arrived from Connecticut. He was a gentleman of about thirty, and had seen Naomi séveral times on her late visit to New Haven, and, after she left, had felt a void in his life, a restlessness and uncertainty of purpose, that impelled him to follow her, and, if possible, regain his quietude and peace of mind in her society. His appearance indicated the utmost asceticism of life ; he was emaciated, but with an intellectual countenance, with piercing black eyes, that seemed kindled to a burning coal beneath his thick, overhanging eyebrows. The natural paleness of his complexion was deepened by the communication he was about to make. As he passed up from the North End, where his friends dwelt, to the house of Mr. Wilson, his thoughts so centred in his own emotions that

Digitized by Google

he scarcely lifted his eyes from the ground, he was startled by an instantaneous and vivid light. The sun had been long beneath the horizon, and, as he lifted his eyes towards the western sky, he saw a portentous meteor, a supernatural appearance, — a spear, of a deep red color, the color of blood, the point turned downwards towards the land. It paused for a few moments, and seemed shaken as by some invisible hand, and then sunk slowly beneath the horizon.

This wonderful phenomenon turned the attention of the ministers from Naomi to other portentous appearances, and every one had some miracle more appalling than the other to relate. During these relations, every pale face became a shade paler, in the dim light of the apartment. Prayer was instantly offered, while they trembled with dread of God's wrath. The peculiar views which our fathers entertained of the invisible world, their gloomy belief in the agency of evil spirits, their literal interpretation of the Scriptures, that the Devil actually went "roaming about, seeking whom he could devour," joined with the ignorance of the age of the great laws of the physical universe, all conspired to throw a veil of mystery over the most simple appearances of nature, and to agitate the whole community with the report of signs and wonders and dark portents of calamity. May it not be mentioned as an excuse for our fathers, — at least a palliation of the wrong, — that, in their persecution of the Quakers, they looked upon these appearances of nature, and upon the indications of the invisible world that ever surround us, and wrap us, as it were, in a garment of mystery, with timid and terror-stricken minds, and believed that God demanded of them by these signs the destruction of his enemies?

The thoughts, as I have said before, of the assembled ministers were turned from the immediate object of their

Digitized by Google

meeting to these terrible signs and wonders in the heavens, and such an accumulation of evidence for their truth was related, that the most faithless among them, the very Thomases of the company, believed and trembled at the approach of the end of the world. The day, they verily believed, was near, when the heavens would shrivel up like a scroll, and the earth be melted with fervent heat. Before they resumed the subject of their meeting, they resolved to recommend to all the churches a day of public fasting and prayer.

After this they informed their newly arrived brother of the subject of their present conference. At the mention of Naomi's imprisonment and the heavy suspicions she lay under, his pale countenance flushed to the deepest crimson, and, as that passed away, there was left an ashy paleness. For a few moments his emotion prevented him from replying. At last he said, — "This is a case beset with so many perplexities, environed with difficulties so likely, in either result, to present fearful consequences, that I do not mistake, brethren, I believe, in supposing that you would gladly have it entirely withdrawn from your decision." He looked round to see if any one had penetrated his meaning. There was a slight smile upon the countenances of one or two of the younger ministers; but with those who had forgotten their youthful days and feelings, there was no rose-colored dawn upon their minds to intimate that their young brother had traversed the frozen, icy region between Connecticut River and the Bay upon the wings of a power so warm at his heart that he felt no outward cold.

It was difficult for him to proceed. He therefore merely asked permission to be admitted to see Miss Worthington in her prison, as he was the bearer of a letter and messages from New Haven.

Digitized by Google

"To-morrow he should be introduced to the prisoner."

"This evening," he said, — and his pale cheek burned with a deep spot of red, and his lips trembled, — "this very evening it was indispensable that he should deliver his message; for, possibly, he might set out on his return to-morrow morning."

A magistrate present wrote an order for his admittance to the prison. He received it in his trembling hand, and, even in that formal and courteous age, scarcely a slight bow intimated his retreat from the apartment.

His transit across the frozen streets between Mr. Wilson's and the jail was so rapid, that, when he reached the prison, he was so completely out of breath that he paused to recover his strength, as well as to collect his thoughts, before he knocked. It is, I believe, a well-known fact, that when the feelings of the ascetic and self-denying are aroused, when formal and compelled restraint is thrown off, they are more keen and impetuous in the pursuit of their objects, their desires are kindled to an intenser flame, than with those whose passions have been kept even by a moderation in indulgence, and a temperate use of the blessings which God permits to all his children.

The knock upon the prison door was several times repeated before the jailer appeared, and when he did appear, he gruffly refused him entrance at that hour of the evening. Mr. Burton presented his order. The jailer still denied that it was for immediate admittance. It was past eight o'clock, and his prisoner had probably retired for the night. Mr. Burton produced the small sum of money his purse contained. The jailer repelled it indignantly, — a Boston Puritan jailer accept a bribe! — and still he held the door in his face. The poor pleader at the door had no other resource than to return to the house of Mr. Wilson for a more explicit order.

Digitized by Google

Upon his return, his slower steps recalled him to a sense of the rashness of his proceedings. How could he expect to storm the prison, and carry off the lady whether she would or not? As he reflected, he found his real object was to save Naomi; to rescue her from a formal trial, and to leave the rest to the future. He found that, without the aid and concurrence of some other, even should Naomi consent, he had no means of taking her away, for the temper of the jailer forbade him to hope for any aid from him. When he reached Mr. Wilson's door, he found the ministers had broken up their conference, and were wrapping themselves warm previously to their departure. The reverend gentleman was left alone in his solitary house, and was just retiring to his still more solitary bedroom. A hint had been given the lonely widower of the real cause of the impetuosity and agitation of his young brother, and, feeling himself so doubly bereaved by the loss of all domestic ties, he was prepared to sympathize with him, and, opening again the glowing logs on the hearth of his study, he sat down to listen. The young enthusiast entreated him to think of the odium that would be thrown upon the ministers if they impelled the court to severe measures. The people were becoming weary of persecution, and, in the case of Naomi, in her youth and sex "there was a speechless dialect that moved them to compassion."

Mr. Wilson said, that, on the contrary, public opinion was never so bitter as now against the cursed sect of Quakers; witness the crowded prisons, and the eagerness to seize every one aiding and abetting them, — the whippings, the scourgings, and, only last June, the scaffold and the halter. In his own heart there was a still, small voice pleading for Naomi; he thought, too, that many of his brethren would willingly wash their hands of the whole

Digitized by Google

transaction, although others believed it was sent by Providence just at this moment, thrown exactly in their way, to try their hearts and to prove their zeal.

Conceding so much, the other, like a drowning man, caught at the straw. How easy it would be, he said, for him alone, with only the connivance of the jailer, — such connivance as was used in the case of Mary Dyer, when she escaped the first time —— and that very night Naomi might be free, released secretly from the prison, and —— He paused.

The aged widower could only smile at the confidence of youth and passion; the smile was followed by a sigh; he remembered his own youth, and how hard it had been, and how often he had pleaded in vain, even to his wedded wife, to accompany him in all peace and security across the Atlantic. He was touched by the pleading, and moved by the confident assurance of success, of his young brother, and promised the very next day to collect the opinions of his brethren. If they were in favor of conniving at the escape of Naomi, and thus cutting the knot of doubt, he would aid and abet his young friend in his private plan of being the chosen instrument; but — and Mr. Wilson hinted a doubt that Naomi herself might object to that mode of release; and while he was drawing on his overcoat and tying his moccasons, he asked, — "Do you really expect a reward for this chivalrous knight-errantry, or is it all a pure, disinterested service?"

Mr. Burton answered with the proverb, — "Faint heart never won fair lady."

"Yes," said Mr. Wilson; "but I will give you another proverb in answer to yours, not so delicate, perhaps: — 'It is easy to lead a horse to water, but the whole universe cannot make him drink.'"

Digitized by Google

Mr. Burton smiled a sort of incredulous smile, and the reverend old gentleman thought within himself, — "Would to heaven that she could be induced to accept marriage instead of martyrdom, a husband instead of a halter! A weight of a thousand fears would be lifted from my heart." And he hastened with the alacrity of youth across the frozen streets to the prison door, where he instantly obtained admittance for his young clerical brother.

It must be recollected, such was the influence of the ministers and the elders of the church, that they doubted not their power to withdraw Naomi from the civil tribunal; and as every member of the court was also a member of the church, it would only have been entering a refusal to prosecute the case farther.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Sees distant plains of Eden gleam,
And does not dream it is a dream."

Naomi sat in her solitary prison; by the neglect of the jailer's wife, no light had been brought to her room. The strongest and most hopeful spirits are subdued by long-continued solitude. Was it strange that the thought was forced upon her, that she might be of little value, even forgotten, in the circle that she had indeed blessed by her presence? By degrees the pinings of a sad and doubtful spirit were added to the utter loneliness of her heart. She was suffering under the most depressing of all anxieties, *doubt*, — doubt whether, in the sacrifices she had made, the spirit that had influenced her had been the spirit of truth. "Was it not a lying spirit," she asked herself, "that bade me sacrifice myself, that now bids me suffer for the truth? Is my truth better than another's? Could I not have dwelt within myself, and *outwardly* have been theirs?" This was not a question implying hypocrisy, for every reflecting person leads a double life, an inner and an outward existence. This inner life that is hidden within the soul, the true "life of God in the soul of man," — it is the secret fountain in whose fulness the soul dwells, and which feeds the aspiration that bids us

Digitized by Google

reach the true and the beautiful, — that feeds, but cannot allay, our thirst for the holy and the perfect. "Here," thought Naomi, "I might have dwelt, with food that the world knew not of, and outwardly have conformed to the requirements of the church."

She sat leaning with crossed arms upon the oaken table, and her hair, which had fallen from the ribbon that confined its folds, concealed her face. She soon felt the sophistry by which she had tried to lay a flattering unction to her soul, and, shaking off the despondency of the moment, she was about to rise and call for her light.

At this instant a taper shone into the room, and the well-known paternal voice of Mr. Wilson pronounced her name. She started at the sound, rose, and, as her eye fell upon the gentleman from New Haven, an expression of surprise was succeeded by one of pain and sorrow, that passed over her countenance; but, recovering from her surprise, she greeted the Rev. Mr. Wilson with humility, and held out her hand to Mr. Burton. Mr. Wilson said he had not come himself with spiritual instruction nor admonition, but to introduce one who doubtless came rich in spiritual gifts suited to Naomi's afflicted state, and ready to open to her all the treasures of divine truth, and to prepare her mind by devout supplication for the trial that awaited her. He would therefore take leave, giving her only his blessing.

Naomi cast a beseeching look at her pastor, entreating him to remain; but he heeded her not, and left the narrow apartment, — now, indeed, far too narrow to the forlorn Naomi.

The suitor from Connecticut was made up of the stiffest, sternest elements of orthodoxy, to which he had added the asceticism of a solitary and studious life. He certainly had perceptions of beauty and loveliness to be

Digitized by Google

touched so deeply by Naomi as to bring him over the icy hills, in the severities of winter, in order to secure her to himself. But, as I have said before, he felt an intolerable restlessness after she had departed ; his studies ceased to interest him ; his books appeared to him to be in an unknown tongue ; indeed, every language was now dead to him but the language of love.

Naomi had perceived that he hovered around her in New Haven, but she scarcely thought she had made an impression that would last upon one so immersed in spiritual and metaphysical existence. She knew not the intensity of feeling, which, when the passions are aroused, takes possession of the unnaturally self-denying and ascetic, overthrowing the reason and leading to all the delusions of insanity. The moment Naomi cast her eyes upon him, she perceived the object of his visit, and she felt a cold shiver run through her frame.

The natural feelings of man are ever at war with the Calvinistic theology. In this case, impelled by the impetuosity of his feelings, Mr. Burton would have loved Naomi, if she had been that impossibility to conceive of in woman, an unbeliever. There was a pause when the Rev. Mr. Wilson shut the door. Mr. Burton seemed unable to introduce the object of his visit ; but, true to his sect, he broke the silence by a question which to another would have appeared very foreign to what filled his soul and pressed upon his lips, but in his mind had a close connection with it ; he asked Naomi if she had ever experienced religion ; in other words, if she had been converted.

Depressed and annoyed as Naomi felt, she could not restrain a smile ; but she replied, — " As you are neither my pastor nor spiritual adviser, I can scarcely think what right you have to ask such a question."

Digitized by Google

Mr. Burton went on to tell her, that to him it was the most momentous of all questions, as it was the turning-point with him, it being impossible for him to think of connecting himself with one to whose heart religion was a stranger, however amiable and lovely in natural gifts. Meek as Naomi was, this manner of addressing her appeared so ridiculously presumptuous, that, without even deigning to look at her suitor, she answered, that by no possibility, whether converted or not converted, could such a circumstance occur as his connection with her; and she rose, as though she desired he would take his leave.

Not a conception of the awkwardness of his proceeding had dawned upon the mind of Mr. Burton; but he saw, by the cold and repelling expression of Naomi's countenance, that he was not making immediate progress towards his object, and he instantly threw off the sectarian and the Calvinist, and, like a man, came to the point. "I am come," he said, "to save you. Your life is in danger. There is but one way. No one here can interfere to save you without placing his own life in jeopardy. I am a stranger, not amenable to these laws, and I have the means and the power, would you but give me the right. A sloop is in the stream, waiting only for a wind to sail for New York and New Haven. This very night I can place you in safety on board that vessel."

He paused; but he saw no relenting in Naomi's calm, cold expression.

"Are you aware," he continued, "that here you meet certain death? I have been conversing with your enemies, and there is no relenting in their determination to proceed against you with the utmost rigor of the law, expressly made for those who aid and abet the Quakers."

Naomi said she was not conscious of having any ene-

Digitized by Google

mies in Boston ; besides, he was trying to frighten her ; for the punishment of death had only been inflicted upon those who were themselves Quakers, — never for aiding and comforting them.

" Ah ! but a scourging and a boring of the tongue," he said, " are little short of death."

Naomi shuddered. She thought within herself she would much rather encounter the latter than endure the former.

" This very night," continued her suitor, " you will be in safety. With the morning breeze — for the western sky promises a fair day — we should be far on our way, even before the jailer opens his eyes."

Naomi had stood, unable to speak, as much from surprise as from the rapidity and stream of his eloquence ; but at these last words, thus identifying themselves and their fortunes as though they were already one, she laid her hand upon his arm, and compelled him to pause. He looked at her then, and the cold and unmoved expression of her features checked him at once, and seemed to lay an icy hand upon his heart.

" I will not pretend to misunderstand you," she said. " I doubt not your ability to rescue me from this great danger, in which my life stands perilled, and I thank you with the deepest gratitude of my heart ; but even if the door of my prison stood open, and, instead of mystery, and darkness, and night, the path before me lay in the light of day and led to my father's house, I could not walk it hand in hand with you. I thank you from my deepest soul, and shall ever pray for you." She turned away, and sat down at the most distant part of the room.

Mr. Burton would not be thus repelled. Adopting Naomi's calmness and cold tone, — " Let me only reprieve you, — deliver you from this prison," he said,

Digitized by Google

"and I will leave the future to your generosity. I will leave you free; you shall be restrained by no implied concession, — bound by no sense of obligation. In trusting yourself to me, I will merely place you in safety."

Naomi was touched by this generosity; the tears started from her eyes. Her lover caught at the softened expression of her countenance; hope sprang up when he saw her tears, and he fell upon his knees. Yes, the stern ascetic — he who hitherto had "scarce confessed that his blood flowed, or that his appetite was more for bread than stone," who had never knelt but to God, and that in the deepest privacy of his closet — knelt to that young girl, a prisoner, unrenewed and unconverted, adorned only with the beauty of simple truth, — the stern man and the Calvinist bent his knee, and hot tears started from his eyes, and fell upon Naomi's hand. There is something terrible in seeing a stern man weep. Such tears are the scanty drops that trickle from the cavern of the rock, and are petrified into the costly diamond. Naomi covered her face with one hand, and she did not withdraw the other from his clasp. "In either case," she said, "I could not so requite such manly, such noble generosity. I could not so injure, so wrong, your generous character, as to consent to go with you as your heart craves, and leave my own here, — here, around this prison, where it would linger and bleed, — and regret and sorrow would be your only companions. The life that you had given me would be a worthless and empty gift to you." Seeing him about to speak, she added, — "If my path was from my father's house, instead of a prison, and no stigma of shame and disgrace rested upon the future, that future must be far from yours."

The manner of Naomi was so firm, so calm, so gentle,

Digitized by Google

and yet so decided, that it left not a ray of hope in the mind of her suitor. He approached the door, but turned, and said, — "I leave you, a broken-hearted man; but blame not yourself." And so he appeared when, the next day, he mounted his horse for his journey to his home. The path that lay before him, frozen, icy, and covered with clouds, was like the path of his life. Naomi for a moment burst upon it, like a sunbeam of joy, and it seemed green with hope and rich in blossoms. Now, winter had wrapped it again in its mantle, and the sky had shut over heavy and black with the cloud of disappointment.

Late as it was, the Rev. Mr. Wilson was not yet allowed to seek his pillow of repose. I have already mentioned that Herbert, restless and worn by the horrible state of suspense hanging over the fate of Naomi, hovered like a tormented spirit round the narrow prison that inclosed all for which his heart throbbed in agony or beat in peace. This very evening he had been waiting, alarmed and anxious because no taper glimmered as usual from the little window. He had approached the threshold a hundred times, and listened to catch the sounds within. He heard only the noisy clamors and violent declamation of those Quakers who believed themselves at that moment under the influence of the spirit. He had observed the approach of the gentleman who was refused admittance, and his return afterwards with the Rev. Mr. Wilson, — his admittance alone to the prison of Naomi. The pangs of jealousy were now added to the pangs of despairing love. Impelled by an irresistible impulse, when he saw Mr. Wilson return to his home, he hastened after him, and, before he could close the door, stepped between them and stood before him. The reverend gentleman was startled, but instantly recognized

Digitized by Google

the young student who had so distinguished himself at the Commencement, but had also fallen under some degree of censure for his fearless independence of opinion. He kindly extended his hand, and drew him into his study.

The heart of Herbert throbbed wildly in his breast; he scarcely knew what excuse to make for his intrusion. This confusion gave a timidity to his manner that added to the ingenuousness of his appearance. He scarcely lifted that piercing eye, which was hidden beneath the cast-down eyelid. The rich color of his cheek faded, and he was pale as ashes. Mr. Wilson pointed to a chair, and said, kindly, — "You come, like Nicodemus, in the night, but not, I trust, upon an errand of which the day need be ashamed."

Herbert had now recovered his self-possession. "I came," he said, "to ask you to do for me the same favor that I believe you have done for others, — permit me to visit the prisoners in yonder jail."

"You have a relation among them?" said Mr. Wilson.

Herbert hesitated. He was strongly tempted to say that Naomi was his sister, although he thanked God at the very moment that she was not his sister. He hesitated, and Mr. Wilson kindly and by degrees drew from the ingenuous young man the relation in which he stood to Naomi.

Herbert entertained an erroneous idea, that, as Naomi had never *avowed* any sentiment contrary to the doctrines of the church, she was not amenable to that body on account of the part she had taken in the flight of Margaret; and, as that was an offence which would plead for her in every humane heart when the circumstances were

Digitized by Google

known, she would not suffer severely from the civil tribunal.

Mr. Wilson told him, that, on the contrary, Naomi's sentiments were well known. She had taken no pains, he said, to conceal them, although she had never brought them forward offensively; but there was not the least doubt that she held the distinguishing tenet of that accursed sect, the Quakers, — that is, "the sensible and constant direction of the spirit of God in man."

Herbert said, although in a low voice, that he saw no heresy in that.

Mr. Wilson looked at him with surprise; he had no wish to detect new heretics, and he let it pass. "But," he continued, "even without the knowledge we possess of Miss Worthington's heretical opinions, she is liable to the censure of the church — which is bound to keep watch and ward over every one of its members — for her neglect of her religious duties."

"How is that?" asked Herbert.

"We have sufficient evidence," said the reverend gentleman, "that she absents herself from the family prayers of her step-father; that the Sabbath, especially the afternoon of the Sabbath, is not reverently observed by her; that she often walks out upon the western side of Beacon Hill before sunset on the Sabbath day, thus setting an example of irreverence to those who are eager to throw off the restraints of holy time."

"Well," said Herbert; "but these are not offenees to entail any thing but a slight admonition."

"Ah, my dear young friend! you know little of the spirit of the times; banishment from the country is the lightest penalty that would follow an examination." And Mr. Wilson did not attempt to disguise from Herbert that

Digitized by Google

Naomi's best hopes were in an escape from prison. Together they concerted a plan, which it depended on her consent alone to render practicable; and Herbert went home that night, more soothed and hopeful than he had been since the night he forded the river by her side.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"It may be believed, that in the world behind the stars, where they must certainly have their own peculiar notions upon devotion, even the involuntary folding of the hands may be valued as a prayer; and many warm hand-pressures and lip-pressures, yes, many curses even, may be there received as ejaculatory prayers; while, at the same time, the great church-illuminating prayers . . . . . may be there regarded as mere curses." — JEAN PAUL.

IT was the pious custom of our fathers, in all domestic calamities, to call upon the ministers to hold a day of fasting and prayer at the house of the afflicted. They were so far private, that only relatives and intimate friends were invited to take part in the devotional exercises. Mr. Aldersey had appointed a day for such a fast, and invited the ministers and elders to attend. Such occasions were not strictly held without a morsel of food; no dinner was cooked, but creature comforts and the mere sustenance of the physical part were not wholly neglected. They were somewhat like the funerals that were held at the houses of the deceased, involving great expense, and the preparation for them was sometimes extremely costly. Mr. Aldersey would be behind no one in hospitality, and Faith had been busied several days, during which time the oven had never cooled in making and baking cakes for the fast. To these were added the good wine and ale

Digitized by Google

from the cellar, and in the intervals of devotion they were not sparingly consumed.

Let me not be suspected of the design of throwing the slightest shade of ridicule or censure upon the sincere piety of our fathers; there were among them the purest and most devout spirits, as no doubt there were, as there have been in every age of the church, hypocrites and formalists. Among those who came that day to fast and pray were true and devout hearts, touched with real sorrow; no doubt there were others, who could not live upon merely spiritual food, to whom the creature comforts were the truest means of improvement.

Faith, who, like all sincere but partially instructed souls in whom reverence is strongly developed, trusted most devoutly and entirely in the efficacy of the prayers offered that day. Her imagination had never suggested to her that the New England church was not perfect in its faith and in its discipline. Yet in this particular case, where she had a thousand times penetrated to the bottom of the heart of Naomi, and seen its humble self-abnegation, its transparent purity, and now heard these self-congratulatory prayers, — these ministers thanking God that they were not as others, that they fasted and prayed, that they were not like the poor, suspected heretic, for whom they were met to pray, — she could not but feel and believe that Naomi's prayer, breathed silently in her humble prison, would be as efficacious for the church as those of the church for her; that they would mount upon the white wings of angels, and find their way to the throne of God.

In the intervals between reading the Scriptures and the prayers, refreshments were handed round. The family tailor, a thin and spare man, had already filled his capacious pockets with the cakes that had several times been

Digitized by Google

offered, when an aged woman, who was sometimes hired as a nurse in the family, and had been invited to the fast, and was sitting near, said to him, — "Well, you 'will have a heavy miss of it if the young girl is hung, as they say she will be."

"Not so much as you think," said the other; "her gowns were so plain I made nothing upon them; it is the furbelows and flounces that put the money in our pockets; they take time; a plain gown, such as Miss Naomi wears, may be made in a day, but the flouncing and herringboning take a man a week. Ah, I wish you could see a real court dress, with the ruffs and the cuffs, and the spangles and pearls, the feathers and furbelows, the flounces and flowers, the whalebone and herringbone! Why, I have made dresses in England, for the court ladies, that would stand alone, and almost go alone, and cost, when they were finished, more than a hundred pounds."

"You!" said the old woman, looking at him with an incredulous smile and shake of her head.

"Yes, indeed," said the tailor; "I made a dress for Mistress Gwynn, so covered with pearls and diamonds that they said she never put it on without losing two or three hundred pounds in the pearls she dropped from it."

"You ought to have lost your ears," said the nurse, "for putting them on so slightly that they would fall off when she moved."

"Ah!" said the tailor, with a sly wink, "you don't understand; I knew the court ladies were rolling in riches; — why, if you will believe it, when their lap-dogs are sick, they give them powders of pounded diamonds. Well, as they are always followed by poor wretches that have not even bread to put in their mouths, I meant the pearls should be dropped, so that these poor wretches might find them; then, you know, they were honestly theirs."

Digitized by Google

The old lady nurse shook her head; she was deeply considering whether this mode of transferring the property of the rich to the poor and needy was really honest.

They were now hushed into silence; one of the elders had again opened the Bible, and was beginning to exhort; this was followed by prayer. As soon as it was over, the tailor began upon his favorite subject, addressing himself to the old woman. "Ah, I wish you could see the wedding dresses I have made for the court ladies!"

"I have hearn say," said the old woman, "that the court ladies do n't mind being married. But if that is what you want, you will have enough of that, — soon enough, too. The little one, I hear, is going to be married, as soon as they get over the other thing. Poor lamb!"

"Married? — to whom?" asked the tailor.

"Well, they do say, to the young man that saved her life when they were travelling. She fell into a river somewhere; her horse threw her, they say, and he plunged in and saved her life. Well, he, poor man, he was blind, he never thought of such a thing; but the little Ruth, poor thing, she pined and pined (you may see how pale she is), and at last her father, stiff as he sits there, never looking but straight before him, he found it out; and as the young man had no notion that way, why, they say he promised him all Miss Ome's money into the bargain, if things went bad with her, poor lamb!"

The tailor declared he did not believe one word of all this, and the old woman continued her gossip; she did not approve of these out-of-door deaths, hanging, &c.; people should die in their beds of a good long illness, and be well nursed and kept comfortable; there was no comfort in dangling like Mary Dyer in the open air; and, poor angel! she would get no good nursing.

Digitized by Google

While this gossip was going on in one room, poor Sambo was attacked in another. "So," said one of the helpers, "these doings would not suit the young lady up yonder; they say she could not even say the Lord's prayer; she was always stopped in the midst by the Devil."

Sambo declared it was all a lie.

"But she never came to family prayers," said the other.

"O, yes! Miss Omai always come to prayers." Sambo was most blind, he said of himself; he did not *see* her, but he "always hear Miss Omai's silk gown rattle when she came in."

"Well, but, Sambo, you are deaf," said the other.

"Only deaf one ear," said Sambo; "ear next to massa deaf, when he make a long prayer, but t' other ear hear Miss Omai's silk gown, and know Miss Omai's silk gown come to prayers."

"Well," persisted the other, "but Miss Naomi cannot read the Bible; for they say that whenever she comes to any holy words, such as God or the Saviour, the Devil stops her, she can't pronounce them."

Sambo's patience was now exhausted. He was pale with anger. It was a lie, a wicked lie. Miss Omai read the Bible better than Parson Wilson ever read it in the pulpit; beside that, she had taught him to read it. Nobody ever taught him to read, he said, till Miss Omai came all the way from England; and now he could read the Bible as well as any of them.

It was true that Naomi had endeavoured to teach Sambo the alphabet, by making use of the capital letters in the Bible. Bibles were then printed in black letter, and she had found it a hopeless task to make him distinguish the different forms of the capital letters.

Digitized by Google

And Naomi, — how was it with her, in her dreary prison, upon this day, when there were solemn fast and festival in her father's house, of which she was the cause and the object ? It was the only day since her imprisonment that Faith had not cheered, at least for a brief half-hour, the solitude of her narrow cell. This absence, and, moreover, the cause of the absence, had filled her with sad misgivings, clouded the serenity of her mind, and prevented her from reading her own heart aright. Naomi was never self-confident ; an excess of humility sometimes robbed her of her due self-reliance ; they had met to pray for her, but to pray for her as an erring and guilty creature, who had wilfully wandered from the true path ; and now, in the solitude of her prison, as she looked out upon the leaden-colored sky and the dark, turbulent waves of the bay, where no gleam of light penetrated between the horizon and the overhanging clouds, and then looked down upon the snow-covered roofs of the little town, under which roofs she fancied were now beating hundreds of happy hearts, the thought pressed sorely upon her, — Had she not been presumptuous ? Were they not the vain imaginings of an ambitious spirit, rather than the convictions of truth and reason, that had led her here ? She was thinking only of her mental differences with the church, and forgot the noble action for which she was a prisoner. As she leaned upon her little window, and looked out upon the dreary landscape of winter, she recalled the lovely green slopes of England, — the peace and security of her own life there. Had she spoken now, in this hour of despondency, it would have been in the words of her namesake of old, — " Call me not Naomi, call me Mara ; seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Law, take thy victim. May she find the mercy
In yon mild heaven which this hard world denies her!"

THE day appointed for the trial of the prisoners in the Boston jail dawned cloudy and cold; a leaden-colored sky hung darkly over the town, and occasional showers of fine snow added a deeper chill to the air. The prisoners were conducted to the bar by constables, preceded by the sound of beaten drums, and guarded by a company of soldiers.

The Quakers, men and women, entered the court clothed in sackcloth, the men keeping their hats firmly on, the women uncovered, except with their long hair thickly strewn with ashes. This new kind of powdering gave to their features a sharp and deathlike aspect. The appearance of Naomi presented a strange contrast to the wild and witch-like appearance of these women. The first glance would have told the most careless observer that there could be nothing in common between them, and only some strange and unexplained destiny could have brought them in company to the same criminal bar.

Naomi was this day paler than usual, and her hair, which until her imprisonment she had worn curled, according to the prevailing fashion, was combed plainly around her temples, and confined in a knot at the back,

Digitized by Google

giving to her head a purely Grecian form. The extreme coldness of the day obliged her to wrap herself in a cloak of crimson broadcloth, open at the throat, and lined with a dark sable fur; the collar was thrown a little back, and the white throat contrasted with the dark fur of the lining. Naomi was also ordered to take her place with the others at the bar; but the offence for which she was arraigned, that of assisting a condemned Quaker to escape from justice, was totally different from that of being a Quaker.

As soon as Naomi was seated, there was a rush of the young gentlemen, the *élite* of the times, the young Puritan beaux, to a part of the room where they could gaze at and mark every expression, every change of her countenance, her dress, her air, her bearing; and this constant *surveillance* caused not a small part of the annoyance she suffered during her trial.

She was permitted to take a seat, guarded, however, by a constable, and to await her trial till the next day. Ruth, who had been waiting in a distant part of the hall, rushed forward, and placed herself at the side of her sister. Mr. Aldersey — who had throughout assumed the appearance of complete impartiality, and who continually said to himself, "If ye hate not father and mother, son and daughter, for my sake, ye are none of mine" — sat with the Assistants; and the excellent Faith being among the witnesses, Naomi was deprived of the comforting presence of that faithful friend.

The trial of these Quakers would have been soon completed; they denied nothing, they gloried in the offences for which they were placed at that bar; but at the moment they were about being dismissed, Wenlock Christison, a banished Quaker, suddenly entered the court, and took his stand by the side of the other prisoners, striking dismay into the minds of the magistrates.

Digitized by Google

"Are you not the man that was banished on pain of death?" demanded the governor.

"Yes, I am."

"What do you here, then?"

"I am come," was the answer, "to warn you that you shed no more innocent blood; for the blood that you have shed cries to the Lord for vengeance against you."

"We have a law," answered the governor, "and by that law you are to die."

"Have you authority to make laws repugnant to the laws of England?"

"No."

"Then you are gone beyond your bounds. There is no law in England to hang Quakers," was the undaunted reply.

"But there is a law in England to hang Jesuits."

"But I am no Jesuit; and if you put me to death, it is not in the name of a Jesuit, but of a Quaker."

The judges turned slightly pale; they had committed an error; the governor, however, added, — "You have broken our law, and by our law you shall die!"

"What do you gain by it?" said Christison; "for the last man that you have put to death, here are five come in his room. If you have power to take my life, God can raise up the same principle of life in ten of his servants, and send them among you in my room, that you may have torment upon torment; for there is no peace to the wicked, saith my God."

Notwithstanding the intrepidity of the man, the jury immediately returned a verdict of guilty against the voluntary victim.*

* Wenlock Christison afterwards accepted the clemency of the court. — Chandler's *Criminal Trials*.

Digitized by Google

This trial lasted but one day. All were sentenced to perpetual banishment; some to stripes and heavy fines.

The next day being the one appointed for the trial of Naomi, the court was crowded at a very early hour. There was the same impetuous curiosity of the young men to gain a view of the prisoner, to whose numbers to-day were added the young bachelors and undergraduates from Cambridge. The trial of the Quakers, except the sudden appearance of Wenlock Christison, had excited very little general interest. They, especially the women, were low and illiterate, remarkable only for their violence, their power of doing mischief, and a perseverance in their thirst for martyrdom, which gave even to the wildness of their doctrines the pledge of sincerity. But here was a young woman, belonging to one of the distinguished families of the little town, whose apparent offence, that for which she stood at the bar, could be considered no very heinous crime, and only a crime because it was the violation of a recent stringent law. Naomi herself had wished to plead guilty to the charge of assisting Margaret, a condemned Quaker, to escape, and to take the consequences; but the court by no means desired such an issue as that. As I have said before, the report had gone abroad, and was every day strengthening, that Naomi entertained the same opinions as the Quakers themselves; that in her secret soul she was a Quaker, and moreover a contemner of the church and the ministers.

The ministers, as well as the magistrates, had, perhaps unconsciously to themselves, allowed a strong prejudice to grow up in their hearts against this humble girl. She had dared to think for herself, and to differ from those who were alone the true interpreters of the meaning of the Bible, the true ministers of the only true church. If the times and the men are considered, this will appear in

Digitized by Google

them neither strange nor arrogant. They were the men of the day, the fanatics of the hour, and they resembled the fanatics of every age. They *sincerely* thought, that, by torturing heresy, they were honoring truth, — by putting down the heretics, they were exalting the saints.

As Naomi was returning to her prison, the evening before, under the charge of the constable, a small scrap of paper was thrust secretly into her hand by a young woman, who was hurriedly passing at the moment by her side. The cloudy obscurity of the afternoon prevented even the constable that walked at her side from observing it. As soon as she could unfold it, in her prison, she trembled for joy, for she recognized the handwriting. It contained only these few words. "Refuse to answer all questions to-morrow, except those touching the offence for which you are arraigned, that of assisting Margaret to escape."

As I have said before, the court was crowded at an early hour. The dress and appearance of Naomi were the same as on the previous day; but, as she was now alone at the bar, her unprotected, isolated youth touched many hearts. The young men, who had crowded in as on the day before, were ready to peril every thing to save her. The opening prayer by the Rev. John Norton was not such as would encourage the favorable impression her appearance produced. Its fervid eloquence, its denunciatory violence, made the audience tremble even for the safety of the church; the ark of the Lord was in danger; and that pale, and humble, and delicate woman, standing alone at the bar of the criminal, was an enemy to the church, an abettor of wickedness, an agent and instrument of Satan for its destruction.

A momentary diversion was occasioned in the court by the debate whether Sambo should be sworn and admitted

Digitized by Google

as a witness. The court objected to administering an oath to a person who could not read. Sambo had been baptized, and was a member of the Boston church ; but as he did not know the letters of the alphabet, the judges thought he would not understand the obligations of an oath.

Sambo averred that he knew how to read, that Miss Naomi, the prisoner at the bar, had taught him to read. His ideas of reading were like those of a little child, who, on the second day of going to school, asked what she was to learn *that* day, for that she had learned to read the day before.

Upon Sambo's persisting in the opinion that he could read, and to gratify his extreme anxiety to become a witness, he was ordered to make the trial in the open court. The Bible was presented to him, open at one of the chapters of the Book of Numbers. Sambo had learnt by heart, with the assistance of Naomi, the Psalm beginning, " The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want " ; and he read it off with great fluency, with the chapter of Numbers before his eyes. This was sufficient for the court. The judge declared Sambo could not be admitted as a witness.

The most essential and important testimony to the fact of Naomi's assisting a condemned Quaker, Margaret, her nurse, to escape, was expected from Herbert Walton ; but to all questions, put in every form of ingenuity and craft, they could only obtain the answer, that the horse was saddled and brought to Margaret, herself placed thereon, and her path pointed out, from a sentiment of pure humanity and a desire of his own that she should escape. Neither by sign, nor word, nor look, did he betray that he had ever seen the prisoner at the bar before, or had had the slightest communication with her. Naomi,

Digitized by Google

when questioned, told the truth, without implicating Herbert. *She* had furnished Margaret with her own horse to escape, and she pleaded the motive; Margaret had been the old and attached servant of her mother (and her eyes filled with tears), the faithful nurse of her own infancy, and she hoped *that* would *excuse* her in every parent's heart, and would plead for her in every other.

It is not necessary to enter into the particulars of this trial. Every thing was proved against Naomi; for as Herbert's heart was the temple of conscience, as well as the shrine of love, when put upon oath it was proved that all he did was at the order of Naomi. It was proved beyond a doubt that Naomi had visited a house where Quakers held their meetings, and that she alone had instigated and assisted the flight of Margaret from the hands of justice. Not a word was whispered of Margaret's having been sheltered more than three months under the roof of Mr. Aldersey. It was not the purpose of the court to implicate so exemplary a church-member, so zealous a detecter of heresy in others. Ah! the cross he had to bear was sufficiently heavy, — a step-daughter had brought under his roof-tree the taint of heresy; a relative, whose destruction would throw into his hands some thousands of pounds, and spread over his character the fresh gilding of a purer zeal for the church!

Every thing, as I have said before, had been proved against Naomi; but they were offences that pleaded for her in every benevolent heart. As she stood there, in the sweetness of her youth, in her unprotected orphanhood, a criminal only in the eyes of those whose minds were bound with the iron chains of bigotry, an angel to invisible spirits, if they hovered there, the court perceived that a murmur of disapprobation of their proceedings against her was extending among the audience; every eye

Digitized by Google

was turned with softened expression towards Naomi, and the younger portion of the assembly were pressing with enthusiasm towards her. Suddenly, the judge seemed to awake, and put the question, "Did she believe herself in a state of grace?"

Naomi was taken by surprise. She was too humble, too truly self-conscious of infirmities, to answer in the affirmative, and yet, as she was a member of the church, to have answered in any but an assured spirit would have been to condemn herself, in the view of those who held the orthodox creed of the questioners, as an unconverted sinner. Suddenly the paper that had been thrust into her hand occurred to her memory. She breathed again, and answered, that she humbly conceived she was not bound to answer that question, as it was totally foreign to the offence for which she stood arraigned at their bar.

A whispered conference ran round the court; and she was asked, "Was she not amenable to the church, — a subject of its care, its admonition, its discipline?"

"Certainly," said Naomi; "but she was not conscious that she stood arraigned before the spiritual court of the church."

"She did not, at this moment," they answered; "but the court had decided, that, before pronouncing sentence against her, they would recommend her to the examination, the admonition, and discipline of the church."

At this announcement Naomi's courage failed, and she became pale as death. She knew that such an examination would be inexorable, and that with a pure conscience she could make use of no mental reservation, and could not escape the condemnation of her judges. A gulf was suddenly opened before her, from which there was no escape. The other offence, prompted by gratitude and humanity, would be excused by every benevolent heart, and

Digitized by Google

if punished as a violation of a recent law, could be punished only very lightly; but to think for herself upon great questions, to dare to differ from her spiritual teachers, to dare to hold opinions at variance with the only true church, was the unpardonable sin of the age, stigmatized as blasphemy, a sin for whose forgiveness the angels might plead in vain.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXX.

"If love, a slender ray,
Chance through my bars to stray
And pierce to me,
My cell, no more a tomb,
Smiles in its caverned gloom,
As nature to the free."

As I have mentioned before, the place of Naomi's confinement was a small upper chamber. It received light only from a small window in the pointed roof, that projected over and beyond the walls of the under story, and gave her a view of the whole of the street ascending towards Pemberton Hill, and descending on the other side to the long wharf. How different the aspect of the little town from that which it now presents! Instead of long rows of gas, that give to the streets the brilliancy of a summer's day, the light only of a few feeble tapers within the houses struggled through the architectural holes in the tops of the window-shutters, where such luxury as a shutter was permitted, — and where shutters were absent, the discolored rays pierced the green, diamond-shaped panes, throwing a feeble and varying light upon the unpaved streets. There had been since noon a light fall of snow, that lay untrodden upon the ground, which aided the moon, although concealed by thick clouds, to give a partial illumination to the streets.

Digitized by Google

As Naomi looked sadly from her window, she saw the same patient watcher, pacing backwards and forwards like a sentinel on duty, that she had seen every evening since her imprisonment. She had long since learnt who it was that, like the mother bird, hovered around the cradle of his hopes, there to live or die ; but the newly-fallen snow, together with the partial light of the moonbeams, falling directly on the person of the watcher, enabled her to see that he was trying to attract her attention towards himself. Cautiously she raised her window, when a small pebble, aimed with great precision, passed by her arm and fell upon the floor behind her. A slip of paper was bound around the stone, containing only these words : — " Open your window to-morrow at the dawn of day."

Joy, pure joy, swelled her heart as she read these words. She was watched over, and, O, how intensely and devotedly guarded, by one whom she felt it was happiness enough for her to love ! Although all was dark, threatening, and desolate without, in her future, there was light in her heart, a buoyant joy that made bonds and imprisonment seem only like the tendrils of the vine, that bound her to some rough support.

Naomi slept little that night. From her window, just at the foot of her bed, she watched the gradual withdrawal of the clouds, and the opening rents where the blue sky shone through, and the constellations, as star after star they passed over and went down in the west, the long winter's night, so cheerless to the wakeful prisoner. But those few words had spread beneath her the soft couch of hope ; and as soon as she saw the first rose-light of dawn reflected upon the snow-covered summit of Beacon Hill, she rose softly and opened her window. She stood but one minute admiring the varying color of the light upon the snow-covered roofs of the houses, when a pigeon, a

Digitized by Google

perfectly white dove, lighted upon her window-sill, fluttered his wings a moment, so that Naomi saw a letter attached beneath them, and then flew into the chamber and rested upon the table. It seemed so strange and wonderful a messenger, that Naomi trembled far more than the little flutterer before her when she approached him to detach the letter. The bird expected this; but as soon as he was relieved of his letter, the window being still open, he spread his wings and darted away. Naomi rushed to the window, but there was no one in the street, and the dove's lessening wing was all she saw, as he floated away in the blue ether.

The dove has ever been the messenger of peace and love, from the time when it skimmed the wild, tossing waves of the deluge, to the period when it descended as the emblem of spiritual purity upon the head of the Son, and down through all the ages of violence and war, till now, when it lighted on the humble window of the most unoffending and gentlest of prisoners.

The letter detached from its wing contained a key, and a well-arranged plan for Naomi's escape. It required only personal intrepidity and the courage that few women possess, together with complete confidence in him who arranged the plan of escape. It was indeed a bold and well-arranged plan, and Naomi, as she finished its study, laid down the paper in despair.

It was so arranged that no one could be implicated, not even that disinterested friend, Faith. Herbert alone took the responsibility upon himself; but then it involved a winter's journey through the icy and snow-impeded paths of the forest. Naomi had too much good-sense and purity for prudery, but she could not resolve to compromise the safety and honor of this generous friend, and perhaps blight his prospects through life, by connecting his name

Digitized by Google

with one branded with heresy, and perhaps also blighted for ever by the dread expiation of heresy.

The plan was not accepted. Her window remained closed through the night and morning ; for there had been a postscript, directing her, if she acceded to the plan of escape, to open her window the next morning, when the dove would return for her reply. No, the window remained closed. Naomi would not compromise her friend. As soon as she had decided this deep and terrible conflict, she opened the Bible, as the unhappy often do, to see if the eye will not fall upon some comforting words. Naomi was startled as hers rested on these words of Job : — " My days are past, my purposes are broken off. If I wait, the grave is mine house : I have made my bed in darkness. And where is now my hope ? As for my hope, who shall see it ? "

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXI.

The day for the examination of Naomi before the committee of the church, a day far more appalling than that of her trial, was to be on the morrow. She felt at this moment completely isolated; there was no one whom she could make understand her exact position. Even Faith would scarcely have comprehended, if she were not fully a Quaker, how she could differ so essentially from the church as to put her life in jeopardy. Her great anxiety was, to avoid an interview with her step-father, as she had no wish to involve herself in a quarrel with him. She thought at one time of sending for the Rev. Mr. Wilson, and, with sincere openness, confiding to him the truth of her inmost soul; but she recollected that Mrs. Hutchinson gained nothing by her reliance upon the Puritan saint, — the Rev. Mr. Cotton, — but nearly involved him in the opprobrium that attached to herself. But, forlorn as Naomi felt, she was far from conscious of the real odium attached to her. The slanders that had accumulated since she was brought before the little public of Boston at her trial, and that had been whispered from ear to ear, and from house to house, made her threefold the child of the Devil. All this had arisen from the expected censure of the church, which, as I have said before,

Digitized by Google

placed one, in this religious community of Boston, beyond the pale of mercy or justice.

The morning that Naomi was conducted by the constable from her narrow prison to the house of the Rev. Mr. Wilson, short as was the transit, a crowd, impelled by curiosity, or a cruel spirit of oppression, gathered around her on the way. It was indeed Thursday, the day of the Lecture. The little town was unusually full, and, unless she should take a very circuitous path and entered the back premises of the Rev. Mr. Wilson, — which the constable refused to do, — she was obliged to cross the market-place, now filled with country sleds and sleighs; horses tied to posts, with both saddle and pillion, showing that the country dames had accompanied their husbands or cavaliers for the purpose of attending the Lecture. Boys held cows and calves by the halter, and more than one living swine, together with many lying stiff and frozen, were offered in the market that morning. As Naomi passed, it was soon known; and the rude boys called after her, — "There goes Molly Hutchinson's granddaughter, — there goes the half-Quaker! Well, the cart 's all ready, and the whip, too. I 've a nice yoke of oxen that will go as slow as you want; — give you a dozen before they have gone ten steps."

Naomi was taken into the room I have already described, — the study of the reverend pastor. The sun, shining into the windows that looked out upon the dazzling white of the snow, showed its scrupulous neatness; and only the light ashes of the hickory wood, consuming in the ample chimney, furnished motes to dance in the sunbeams. The extreme warmth and comfort of the room seemed to be entirely appreciated by a couple of plethoric cats, that were lying curled up near the andirons. Mr. Wilson was dressed for the Thursday Lecture, with

Digitized by Google

his cassock and his bands ; his white hair, parted in the centre of the forehead, hung down upon each shoulder. His mild and sad expression for an instant carried comfort to Naomi's heart, as she asked leave to throw off her cloak, the extreme warmth of the room after the keen outward air inducing a slight feeling of faintness.

With the utmost courtesy he assisted her to remove the heavy cloak lined with fur. Had Naomi been bent upon conquest, she could not have attired herself more becomingly than she had done, unconsciously, and without a thought, except of the extreme coldness of the day. She wore a close-fitting dark-velvet dress, the sleeves and the neck (which was open) being trimmed with the fur of the silver-gray fox. A white cambric chemise, or gorget, as it was then called, was drawn closely up to the beautiful white throat, and her hair, without curl, was plain upon her temples.

Naomi had scarcely recovered from her faintness when the other members of the committee entered. The Rev. John Norton and two of the ruling elders, together with the pastor already present, constituted the tribunal before which she was summoned. It was a strange sight, and a stranger contrast, which the extreme pallor caused by Naomi's faintness had served to heighten. She sat there in her youth and her orphanhood, comparatively ignorant and humble, arraigned as an offender before these stern and grave old men, to account for her unconscious heresies, and to renounce, if possible, the aspirations of her inexperienced heart. On one side, the experiences of threescore years ; the midnight studies of scholars ; the gray-bearded learning of sages ; the gathered ashes of the burnt-out sacrifices of Hebrew altars ; the garnered leaves fallen from the ancient groves of Greek learning ; the metaphysical subtilties, culled from ponderous tomes

Digitized by Google

of the later fathers, and the stern authority of their own church. On the other side, the orphan girl, ignorant of all but the wisdom of truth and honesty, unlearned in all but the love of the heart.

Mr. Wilson I have already described. The reverend old man was softened by bereavement and age, and looked with an eye of tenderness and pity upon the poor young woman, subjected to the scrutiny of iron wills, and hearts cased by bigotry in iron. Norton was a stern, dark man, and although his eye sparkled with intellect, it did not melt with compassion. Inflexible in his enmity to the Quakers, and inexorable in his condemnation of all who favored them, he had just published his tractate against them entitled "The Heart of New England rent at the Blasphemies of the Present Generation," for which he was rewarded by the General Court with a hundred acres of land. He was, indeed, a burning and a shining light in the church; but his lamp was not fed with the oil pressed from the olive of peace, nor was it kindled at the torch of love. He had none of those tender relentings towards Naomi prompted by the memory of lovely daughters or sweet grandchildren. He regarded her comely beauty as a snare of the Evil One, spread, perhaps, even for him. His only answer, frequently repeated, till it came to be a proverb, when asked what they should do with the Quakers, and those who favored them, was, —"Send them back to hell, the place from which they came!"

The first question that this iron-hearted tribunal put to Naomi was suggested by the tenderness of the Rev. Mr. Wilson, hoping to suggest to her an excuse for one of the charges brought against her, that of not joining the family prayers of her step-father in the morning; but it only served to mislead. "You sleep not well, my dear daughter?" he asked.

Digitized by Google

Naomi answered, somewhat surprised at the question, that her sleep was unbroken till the early dawn, an hour always precious to her; and she added, unconsciously, — "I am an early riser."

Mr. Norton now said, somewhat hypocritically, that he had hoped broken and uneasy sleep obliged her to take the morning hours for repose, as she did not join the family worship of her step-father.

"No," said Naomi, "I have not that excuse to plead. My sleep through the night is as though wafted on downy wings to my pillow; and I am sometimes ready to say, perhaps presumptuously, — 'God giveth his beloved sleep.'"

"But," said Mr. Norton, "this refreshing sleep, does it not lead you to express your gratitude in the morning, and in the worship of the family?"

Naomi answered, that she hoped there was a silent worship in her heart, and an incense of gratitude, that rose to the throne of God, if not fragrant to the perceptions of man.

Mr. Norton said, somewhat sternly, that such ideas and expectations were only the flattering promises of the Evil One to deceive. They were held out by the Devil to prevent simple and sinful souls from doing what was alone acceptable to God, the public offering of devotion and gratitude. Were not the Israelites commanded, in every case, to bring the offering *publicly* and lay it upon the common altar? The burnt-offering, the thank-offering, and the peace-offering, were they not all brought into the great assembly of the people and offered in public? Even the most private and sacred domestic joys were made the subject of public gratitude.

"But," said Naomi, "the Saviour ordered his disciples to enter into the closet, and shut the door, and pray

Digitized by Google

to the Father who seeth in secret; and there is a still more secret and acceptable prayer, that which is breathed in the silent heart."

Naomi had very nearly uttered the most offensive heresy of the Quakers; that is, the sensible and constant direction of the spirit of God in man, made known in prayer; but the ministers, although they frowned, were too intent upon their own questions to pause to censure her at present.

The next question was the same put to her in the court; a question that should never be asked, except in the intimacy of the nearest friendship. "Did she believe herself in a state of grace?" This insidious question was intended to entrap; for how could so humble a creature as Naomi have the presumption to say she believed herself a chosen child of God? which was the only meaning the Puritans attached to that phrase; and having joined the church, she could not say that she was not a subject of grace. She answered, however, modestly, — "If I am not, God can give me grace; and if I am, he can keep me in it."

These were but leading questions. The three great points of denial that were imputed to the Quakers were the Trinity, the Scriptures as the only rule of life, and the church as a divine institution; from these was inferred the denial of the authority of the ministers and of the rites of baptism and the supper.

Naomi had declared from the beginning, that she had no sympathy with the Quakers *as disturbers of the church or of the civil order*. There was nothing in common between them, she said; her connection with them was wholly accidental; she became involved with them, and a prisoner in the same jail, solely from her interest in Margaret. But in consequence of her solitary childhood,

Digitized by Google

and the circumstance of living where religious opinions were discussed, she had had her mind excited upon subjects with which young women rarely trouble themselves, and had been so happy as to find all doubts removed.

To the question whether she denied the Trinity, she did not presume, she answered, to decide upon a subject so much beyond her powers of comprehension ; but was willing to submit her belief to those learned men who had investigated this incomprehensible dogma of the church.

This answer was not satisfactory ; still, it could not be called heresy. Mr. Wilson commended her humility, and asked in the same breath, — " Did she believe in the Scriptures as the only rule of faith and practice ? "

There was an earlier light, she thought ; the light in the soul, that spoke to the prophets of old, and " now whispers to the willing mind."

There was a quick exchange of glances by her inquisitors, a murmur of disapprobation.

" The spirit is the guide that leads to truth," added Naomi, " whether it be the truth contained in the Bible, or an earlier truth dwelling in every heart."

" Is not the Bible, then, the fountain of all truth, — of all religion ? "

" The Bible," said Naomi, modestly, " appears to me, not religion itself, but to contain the records of a formal and ceremonial religion. If the Scriptures were the only rule of life, what were those saints who lived before the Scriptures were known ? "

" Perhaps, then," said one of the elders, " you deny the Protestant church to be the only true church."

Naomi was silent. This was the point which to deny was the damnable sin of heresy. The question, in its simplicity, was merely this, — " Would she submit herself to the rule of this church, implicitly believe its dog-

Digitized by Google

mas, or listen to the inspiration of conscience in her own heart ? "

Naomi was silent ; for she felt that the answer to the question was the turning-point in her destiny. She could not lie, and here she must be lost. Here was the church itself, in its ministers and elders, arrayed in power and authority, furnished with learned dogmas, the prescription of ages, opposed to a simple, unlettered girl. She felt the terrible inequality, and did not answer till the question was repeated.

Naomi had become very pale, but she answered, in a firm voice, — " Although I esteem the learning, and wisdom, and piety of the church, yet, in things belonging only to God and myself, I must live by the light which God has given me, although it be but a rush-light in comparison with the shining lights of the church ; I must live by my own faith, not that of the church. The laws of men are but the injunctions of mortals ; but what the spirit dictates is the voice from heaven within us."

" And you," said Mr. Norton, " you, an unlearned woman, one of the babes of the church (if, indeed, you belong at all to the church), — you oppose your own judgment against the teachers and elders of the church. You light your rush-light, kindled by the spark of vanity, fed with the oil of spiritual pride, and, though obscured by the thick smoke of ignorance, you hold it up in opposition to the golden candlestick, the lights that shine like stars in the church."

" But," said Naomi, " if I must find my own way through the dark providences of God, if I must live by the light that is shed on the difficult passages of private duty, the light that I carry in my own hand, however small and faint, will keep my feet from stumbling far better than the more distant, however glaring, lights of the church."

Digitized by Google

Hard and dry reasoners never feel what is touching in the simple-minded; and Mr. Norton, opposed by the true simplicity of Naomi's character, was pale with anger. He who had written in Latin the learned account of church discipline in New England, he who modelled the Cambridge platform of church government, was confronted by a young girl, — modest, indeed, and unassuming in the expression, but calm and firm in the support, of her opposition. His anger was seen through the working of his pale, sharp features. "It is the spirit of pride, of an unconverted soul, that dictates this arrogant difference from your spiritual teachers," he said; and he rose, as though he were going to quit all and leave them to their darkness.

"Rather," said one of the dark-browed elders, "it comes rather from the father of lies, the Devil, who has entered into the soul of this young girl, comely though she be, to deceive us, and to entice us to excuse her heresies and lies. My advice is, that we proceed with the utmost severity in this case, and crush at once the brood of the serpent by the utmost rigor of the law."

Naomi had hitherto borne herself bravely. She was morally courageous, but she possessed that tenderness of temperament that a rude or harsh word could instantly put down and crush. She kept back the tears that swelled her breast and trembled upon her eyelids, and said, firmly, that she declined to answer any further questions this day. The gentlemen could draw what inferences they pleased, but she conceived they had not the power to compel her to answer further.

The reader must not suppose that Naomi's examination ended here. Ah, no! It was protracted through many wearisome days. She was examined in all the dogmas of Calvinism, dogmas at this day revolting to common sense,

Digitized by Google

and to all those natural feelings that had seemed to Naomi like the inspirations of a higher power. She could not deny these inspirations. To her uninformed spirit, they took the form of revelations from God. In nothing else did she hold any faith in common with the Quakers, but the various tenets of Calvinism, as held by our fathers, seemed to her little less than blasphemies and curses. Let me not be misunderstood ; the most humble and earnest souls may hold these dogmas, — souls that are daily fed with charity and prayer, and filled to overflowing with tender, human love ; but their faith, their tenets, are no part of themselves.

From one of these stern Calvinists is taken the tender blossom, the last that had expanded upon the rough plant, — an infant, unbaptized and unconverted. The parent's creed condemns that child to eternal flames ; but in the family it is remembered as the angel visitant, short in its tarry, but leaving behind the fragrance of heaven. Its little birthplace, its cradle, is a shrine where are gathered all tender memories ; and to the other children, this is the little saint who blessed the dwelling, and to meet whom in heaven is the reward of exertion and of goodness.

The examination of Naomi by the committee of the church did not help her cause with the people, — scarcely with her nearest friends. The crime for which she was arraigned was a humane and generous fault ; but heresy was a secret and terrible taint, feared as it was unknown. Her step-father was incapable of understanding the conscientious scruples that governed Naomi, and would it not have compromised his high character in the church, would it not have drawn suspicion on his orthodoxy, to move in her cause ? Faith, also, could scarcely understand why Naomi, as she was not a Quaker, should differ from the church. The church she thought good enough

Digitized by Google

for any one, and surely Naomi was good enough for the church. Why, then, should they differ? Still, her favorite could not be wrong, and all her energies were at work to reëstablish Naomi, to obtain her acquittal.

Had it been summer, how easily could she have escaped! With the assistance of her brave little horse, she could have been in a few hours within the borders of Rhode Island, at that time the refuge for exiles for conscience' sake. But it was the dead, or rather the depth, of winter; the snow lay deep upon the ground, the dark and gloomy sky foretold that more was gathered there ready to fall, and the winds seemed only to lie hushed over the leaden-colored waves of the bay, ready to curl up their giant billows like terrible barriers against escape by sea. The troubled sea-gulls spread their white wings over the land, as though driven for a moment to take shelter there, and then soared away again into the dim regions of darkness and storms.

The heavens presented strange and alarming aspects; portentous burning stars appeared in the sky; angry meteors shook their lances over the devoted little town; comets darted through the lurid nights; "the sun was said to set in streams of blood, and the moon to cast no shadow; terrible noises were heard in the air; thunders without clouds, and lightnings without rain; strange shapes of coffins and hearses were seen in the sky; armies contending with each other in bloody battles; and angels and devils fighting for the souls of men."* The minds of the inhabitants were wrapped in gloom. These were the signs of God's wrath against them for permitting the Quakers to live; while the Quakers interpreted these signs and wonders as the threatenings of God's anger against their persecutors.

* The annals of the time recount all these signs and wonders in the heavens.

Digitized by Google

There seemed to be a lingering reluctance to pass sentence against Naomi. No shadow of doubt rested upon her guilt. She had, without the consent of her step-father, sheltered and comforted a well-known Quaker. She had been once in a house where Quakers were assembled for their worship ; and she had aided a convicted Quaker to escape from justice. These were offences for any one of which the penalty of the law was precise and severe. Heavy fines, the loss of the ears, boring of the tongue, whipping, and imprisonment, even the last penalty of guilt and crime, had been exacted for less offences ; but in the eyes of her examiners and judges, these were not her heaviest crimes. The plague-spot was not in these open, outside offences. It was the taint of heresy, the sin of daring to think for herself, the unpardonable crime of daring to differ from the church in opinion, the non-submission of her own mind to the minds of her ministers and judges, that condemned Naomi, and took her from under the shadow of the white wings of mercy.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXII.

"Of her visage children were sore afear'd."

PERMIT me, my courteous reader, to change the scene, and to introduce you for a short half-hour into an obscure and dark tenement, somewhere in the north part of the town, near a cove or landing-place for fishing-boats, where, upon all but moonlight evenings, various old, repaired, and crazy boats were drawn up and secured upon the narrow beach of mud and sand. Exactly upon high-water mark there stood a small tenement, the front of which was a dark and dingy shop, where sailors and fishermen could always find the solace of a glass of spirits, or a mug of cider or beer, tobacco for their pipes, and even necessary articles for more essential service, while a small wooden counter was covered with wooden and leaden measures, from a quart-pot descending to half a gill. This little dark space, like the cabin of the smallest vessel, and so low that a man could scarcely stand upright, was hung round with sailors' trousers, baize shirts, and tarpaulins; and pipes, wherever there was an inch of room, were suspended upon brackets.

The tenant of this place of humble entertainment, where the wet and shivering sailor could always find the

Digitized by Google

small creature comforts he craved, was an old and crippled woman, who had seen nearly eighty winters. Her pale, emaciated visage had worn so long the expression of craft, that it seemed to have wrinkled and stiffened into a grotesque mask of mildewed lead, but still she possessed, even at this great age, the power of removing all expression from her features, and giving them the fixedness of death. Her hair, bleached to the whiteness of snow, was drawn back under a hood of rusty black velvet; yet there was enough visible to form a striking contrast to bushy eyebrows as black as jet, and a slight mustache at each corner of her shrivelled lips, of the same color.

It was a dark and stormy evening, immediately after Naomi's trial, and before the sentence had been pronounced; the hour was past nine, and the little shop was closed for the night; the old woman, whom we shall call Mother Bunyan, was seated by the chimney of the low, sloping room that formed the back part of this tenement. Her labors for the day were over, and she was solacing herself with a pipe, and preparing what she called her nightcap, a mug of strong beer, heated by quenching in the hissing liquor the red-hot tongs. A knock at the shop-door did not startle the old woman, for she was accustomed to nocturnal visits. The snow, as she saw by the one pane forming a light for her den, was falling fast, and had completely whitened the little window, and she bid the visitors enter. Two muffled figures came through the shop, enveloped in cloaks, under which one of them carried a dark lantern. The room was enlightened only partially by the glimmering embers of burnt-out logs, so that, when the slide was turned, a strong Rembrandt light was thrown upon the cloaked figures, bringing into relief the white wool that circled Sambo's dark features, and the

Digitized by Google

brilliant eyes, but somewhat pale features, of his master's daughter, Ruth.

The old woman manifested no surprise ; she was accustomed to the visits of the young, even at these late hours, and without rising she called to Ruth, and pointed to a low seat. " Come here, my lamb," she said, " and warm your poor little hands " ; for Ruth was shaking with cold and fear. She then signed to Sambo to put down his lantern and wait in the shop, for she inferred at once, and with truth, that Ruth's business was private. Poor Sambo obeyed; it had been the business of his life to obey, and, beside this instinct of obedience, he had no wish and no will to refuse any order whatever from mistress Ruth. When, therefore, she ordered him to come with her to-night, he only besought that it might be after prayers, lest he should be summoned, and his aid in what he knew would mortally offend, not his master, but Faith, betrayed. Ruth also was glad to put off her nocturnal walk till after prayers, lest they might be recognized in the street, perhaps detained, and missed at the appointed hour.

I have mentioned before, that Ruth was an intrepid and self-willed girl, but this walk through the snow, of a stormy night, after the bell had tolled nine, required all her courage. She was, however, now here at the confessional with the old sibyl, or the dark priestess of the future, and she was determined not to be balked of her object. She passed more than half an hour in secret conversation with the old woman, when she called to Sambo and bade him take the lantern to accompany her home. Upon the way home, Ruth leaned upon the arm of poor old Sambo, who tottered with age, and cold, and fear. Sambo ventured once to ask if old Witch Bunyan had promised her good luck ; but Ruth was silent, and

Digitized by Google

when she reached the door, she bade him good night in a whisper, and crept to her chamber. She need not have feared being shut out; in these primitive times there were neither locks nor bolts; the latch was easily lifted, but the inmates were safe. Did Ruth sleep soundly? Ah, yes! for the light-hearted and innocent, those who scarcely need the solace of "nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," easily "knit up the ravelled sleeve of care."

To return to her who I would fain hope has excited the interest of my readers. Naomi pined in her solitary cell, waiting for her sentence, passing wearily the dark and gloomy days of winter, and the long, long nights of the winter solstice, wearing away the heavy hours in short and broken slumbers, or in long seasons of wakefulness; for Naomi had been accustomed to a life of activity, and to pass much of the day in healthful exercise. The sudden and total change from a life of active and perpetual employment to one of sedentary and quiet indolence, to whole days, and weeks, and months of miserable pacing of the eight feet of her prison, had caused an unnatural activity of the mind, an extreme excitement of the nervous system, so that sleep was sometimes for whole nights long a stranger to her eyelids. It was in vain that she made every occupation of her day methodical and exact, that she attained a strict governance of her thoughts, so that no anxious nor exciting memories should haunt her pillow; in vain that she committed the purity of her soul to the guardianship of angels, and resigned the whole of her future to the love and wisdom of her Heavenly Father. Again and again would Naomi exclaim, —

> "O sleep, O gentle sleep,
> Nature's soft nurse, how have I frighted thee,
> That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down,
> And steep my senses in forgetfulness?"

Digitized by Google

The loss of sleep induced a general lassitude and irritability of the nervous system, harder to bear than real and dangerous illness. It was in vain that she strove against it. Naomi's heart was high and courageous, but the delicate structure of the nerves, weakened by this long-continued wakefulness, was attenuated and wearied, and often Naomi found herself melted to tears, without any new or apparent cause for this weakness.

She had passed a long and gloomy evening without a light, — for the jailer's wife had forgotten to bring it, — in alternate efforts to keep back, and in momentary yieldings to, her tears, when suddenly the door was opened, and the little daughter of the jailer ushered in a bent and apparently crippled old woman, who supported herself with a crutch. Naomi started, and asked the child where were her parents, and how could any one gain admittance in defiance of the order of the magistrates, forbidding access to the prisoners in the jail.

Patience replied, that her parents had gone to church meeting, and that the old woman assured her she had permission from the governor himself to visit Naomi.

"Say no more," cried the old woman, "I come to give ye comfort"; and she signed to the girl to leave them.

Naomi now recognized the old woman of the sailors' shop, that she had seen at her step-father's door, and that Faith sometimes, in the severity of the winter, had visited, to inquire if she were starving or freezing. I did not inform my readers, at the time of Ruth's almost midnight visit, of the bad reputation she sustained in the colony. It was whispered about, although not in the ears of the ministers, that she made use of many vile and secret practices, but not to get her living, for at that time, in the little community of Boston, honest poverty was never

Digitized by Google

allowed to suffer. This old woman was said to pretend to a knowledge of the secrets of futurity. It was said that she could restore lost articles, — reveal the inmost secrets of the soul to him who sought the hidden mystery, — that she could give the lover favor in the eyes of his mistress, and cause the expectant heir to rejoice in the death of the miser. In short, she was the Mrs. Turner of New England, ready for any nefarious and dirty work. It may seem strange to my readers that such a character should be permitted to exist in the little Puritan community of Boston. Human nature is the same; and the desire to pry into the secrets of futurity, to believe in the agency of the Evil One, that belonged to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was not excluded from any spot on the globe. The ministers would not have permitted a witch to live; and this very old woman was, not many months after this period, banished from Boston on pain of death.

Naomi, in the weak and irritable state of her nerves, merely said, — "You come without permission, and I desire that you would immediately leave me."

"I come," she answered, "to give you freedom. Listen only to what I say, and before twenty-four hours you shall be in safety."

"What would you say?" asked Naomi.

"Look into your own heart," said the woman; "who fills it at this moment? Of whom were you thinking when I opened the door? Where do you turn your eyes whenever you go to that little window? Whose shadow do you follow in the sunlight and in the moonlight?"

"It is unnecessary for me to answer," said Naomi, "if you can thus read my heart."

"Well," said the old woman, "you can count the pulsations of your own heart, and I can tell you, that

Digitized by Google

where one throb of joy beats in yours, it is answered with a throb of anguish in hers; a young heart, too, that you are bound to guard from pain, that you have vowed to protect at the expense of your own happiness."

"Hers?" said Naomi. "What do you mean, old woman? What do you come to tell me?" and all color left Naomi's face, and she remained pale as death.

"Ah!" said the old woman, "I did but give voice to your own thought. I touched the chord, and your own soul returns the sound."

I have before hinted at the rumors, that had been current ever since the journey when Walton snatched Ruth from the swollen river at the moment she was sinking, that her young heart had beat only for him, and that Mr. Aldersey had observed it, and would fain reward him with her hand and with Naomi's fortune. Naomi, too, although no word of this had been whispered to her, had observed, whenever Ruth visited her in the prison, a change in the young girl, — frequent blushes and sighs, and a covert but constant desire to lead the conversation to, and to dwell on, Herbert Walton. Naomi could not and did not admit the thought, but now, when it was mentioned by another, a flash of light illumined her whole mind.

"And who has bid you," asked Naomi, "to come here and wound me with suspicions that can only add to my distress?"

"I did not come to wound," said the old woman, with a malicious smile; "I came to give you freedom, — freedom before that sun sets again, will you only accept it."

Naomi was silent. She knew some condition was annexed to this offer of freedom. She scarcely wished to know what, and she was silent.

The old woman fixed her stony eyes upon her with that look from which all expression was withdrawn.

Digitized by Google

"You know," she said, "that you are condemned to death." Naomi started. "At least, your death is determined on, if not yet made known. One sentence only is possible for you, — the rope that served Mary Dyer will do for you. You are heavier than that old woman; but it was not stretched too much by her poor, emaciated body, and it will do for you. Freedom I can promise you, — freedom, assured by a powerful friend. You have only to consent to go on board a vessel that is now in the stream. To-morrow evening the door will be opened by a powerful hand, — a person who will insure you from molestation."

"And what previous sacrifice is demanded of me?" asked Naomi.

The old woman came close to her, and whispered, in a loud and hissing whisper, in her ear, — "You have only to write a letter to Herbert Walton, renouncing him for ever, and urging him to love and marry your little sister Ruth."

"Begone, fiend," said Naomi, "and never again darken my prison door! Of what value, think you, would life be to me after such a renunciation? Let death come the next hour, it would be as welcome as the new-born babe to its mother."

The old woman had retreated a few steps, and sat down with the same unmoved and stony expression. She was like some great instrument of torture, that utters its mechanical groan and does its work, were it to wring a limb or pierce a heart, and then is still till the next turn of the wheel gives another thrust.

Naomi was neither taken by surprise, nor was she appalled and thrown off her guard by the weakness of her nerves. The moment she reflected, she knew the object of the old woman was, not to propose flight to her, but

Digitized by Google

to frighten her into some concession or renunciation that would favor her step-father's views upon Herbert, by presenting to her, in the weakened state of her mind, the only alternative, — a horrible death or flight. But she knew well that the magistrates would not venture upon another execution, especially that of a woman, and that she would herself gain nothing by flight; flight itself was banishment, and a legal banishment was no more terrible to her than one enforced by fear and flight. But it fell upon her heart with the heaviness of lead, that the object of this visit was to intimidate, and induce her to fall into the plan, already ripened, to detach Herbert from her, to work upon her generous and sisterly feelings, and induce her to renounce all claims in favor of Ruth. She perceived that a powerful enemy was at the root of the plot, and that enemy her step-father. Who else could have assured her of an immediate and unmolested flight? Who else had influence to overcome the scruples of the jailer, and set open the prison doors?

Naomi, as I have said before, was humble, and the terrible course of discipline she had gone through had served to increase her self-distrust. At this moment, this painful self-distrust took possession of her mind, and caused her to wrong in thought the truest and most faithful heart. She raised her head at length, and said, — "You bid me advise Herbert to forget me, and to love my sister; think you that forgetfulness is so easy, and that love can come and go at command of the will?"

The old woman came again close to Naomi, and hissed in her ear, — "I have means that never failed; I can make the mother forget the babe of her womb, and the bridegroom forget the bride that was only yesterday his own."

"Then," said Naomi, immediately recovering the full

Digitized by Google

powers of her reason and intellect, "then you need no concurrence of mine. Begone, fiend, and never again disturb the solitary hours of one who defies you!"

At this moment the door was opened by the jailer's wife. So little surprise was manifested at the sight of the old woman, that Naomi could not help suspecting that the concurrence of the wife, at least, in this intrusive visit, had been previously obtained.

And how was it with Herbert during this plot against his happiness? Was he left personally unmolested? Mr. Aldersey ventured once, and once only, to lift the veil from the cloistered and vestal sanctuary where Naomi dwelt, as in a holy shrine; but he was met with so stern and so determined a rebuke, that the crafty man of forms found upright and straightforward ingenuousness more than a match for wily and concealed hypocrisy.

Naomi's sentence could be delayed no longer. She had been three months a prisoner, and January was drawing to a close. It was the very heart of the winter, and the horrors of banishment by sea or land could scarcely be increased. The usual sentence against the Quakers was banishment in twenty-four hours, or the utmost extremity of the law.* This was all that could be wrung from the tender mercies of the judges in their sentence against Naomi, — banishment in twenty-four hours from the time, not of her receiving the sentence, but from the time of its being promulgated, — publicly declared through the mouth of the hangman. Should physical debility, the tenderness of a feminine nature, or the frailty of a too delicate constitution, cause her to linger to breathe the air of New England beyond the prescribed moment, death

* See the records of the General Court in the State-house, Boston.

Digitized by Google

was inevitable ; the atmosphere of New England was deadly to a condemned Quaker.

Naomi had been informed of her sentence, and permitted to return to her step-father's house, guarded, however, by constables, till the moment of her embarkation. The evening was closing in, and in sad and tearful rejoicing the few friends who remained faithful to Naomi were pressing around her ; Faith and the attached servants, Ruth, too, — who loved her sister as a light nature loves, and Naomi looked upon her with the pitying love of an angel, — all were gathered around to listen to the words of patience and hope that fell from her lips, and to gather faith and comfort from one who seemed incapable of fainting or faltering upon the great path of duty ; when suddenly was heard upon the night air, now thick and murky with the gathering storm, that well-known hollow sound of the drum, and the heavy feet of the procession, headed by the constable, proclaiming from street to street, and corner to corner, the sentence of Naomi. They stopped before the house of Mr. Aldersey, and every syllable of the sentence, sending the pain of death to the hearts of those who listened, was distinctly heard, — " Banishment in twenty-four hours from that very moment, nine o'clock, the 24th of January." The magistrates had chosen this hour in order to strike terror into those who would favor the Quakers. The night was extremely dark, and the procession was headed by torches, whose lurid and murky flame, as they passed from house to house, glared into the windows, and threw a sinister light upon peaceful, domestic scenes of repast or devotion. As the sounds died away in the distance, the inhabitants drew nearer to their fires, and, looking in each other's pale faces, they whispered, with a shudder, — " Twenty-four hours, and a

Digitized by Google

tempest gathering in the sky! " — the dark clouds rolling in from the ocean, the winds hushed together, gathering their strength for the morrow, and the threatening tempest becoming every moment more appalling. The exclamations of the people were according to the bitterness or the tenderness of their feelings. Many exclaimed, — " He has sent out his arrows and scattered them. He has shot out his lightnings and destroyed them." " They shall be broken with a rod of iron. Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." The self-righteous cried, — " This is a day of deliverance to the righteous, a day of pouring out of wrath to the ungodly. God be praised! destruction hath overtaken his enemies." Some few, of tenderer natures, touched with compassion, looked round with tearful eyes upon their children, and cried, — " God have mercy upon the fatherless and the orphan! "

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Ha! banishment? be merciful; say death;
For exile hath more terror in his look,
Much more, than death. Do not say banishment."

THE dismal sound of that drum, proclaiming Naomi's sentence, struck upon other ears. Herbert Walton heard it, and rushed stunned and overwhelmed to his home. He had lingered fascinated upon the spot, to hear her doom pronounced, and then fled, to hide in a deeper solitude his unutterable misery.

The stern and haggard expression of that youthful countenance, — his complexion, formerly rich like the brown hue of the apricot, now ashy pale, — the gloomy fire of his eyes, formerly so gentle and winning, — forbade his sister to approach him with hope of comfort, or even with expressions of pity. He sat stern, speechless, overwhelmed, completely crushed; or he walked the apartment with rapid strides, rivers of tears pouring over his cheeks. These alternations of fierce anguish or of softened sorrow, when the memory of his love and hope dissolved him in tears of fond regret, or changed to the agony of despair, continued all that night. His father retired to pray, but his sister sat silently by him, and sometimes, in moments of comparative calm, she took his hand

Digitized by Google

in hers. But he shrank from sympathy. No; he must wrestle with his grief alone.

Shakspeare has left an imperishable picture of youthful love, where the misery of the hour consists in banishment. But in those Southern imaginations, no sterner picture is presented to Romeo than that of "summer flies seizing the white wonder of dear Juliet's hand, stealing immortal blessings from her lips." Here were sterner images. This, his Northern flower of love and happiness, had started up thus beautiful and vigorous amid the sterile soil of Calvinism; it had blossomed in the stifled air of imprisonment and fear; environed with thorns, it had shed its sweet fragrance upon the desert of his life, but now the steeled hand of bigotry, the hand that could grasp unhurt the nettle and the thistle, had torn it away and placed an iron heel upon its tender beauty.

How did his rebellious heart rise in its anguish, not only against the authors of his misery, but against God himself! Had he been pleased to hide her in the grave, had he placed the barrier of time between them, Herbert could have imagined her in an angel's robes, he could have cherished her as a saint in memory. She would then have been his, his alone, in thought; no earthly rival could intervene to rob him of the certainty of love beyond this world. But now the vulgar barriers of earth, the waves of the ocean only, would roll between them; others could look upon her; rivals would intervene; time, and with it change, would come, — forgetfulness, ah! ten thousand times worse than death.

In the midst of Walton's anguish, reason did not wholly desert him. It told him that Naomi was lost to him, but not utterly; he could not detain her, — he could not follow her; but reason whispered to him that banishment *was not wholly death*; "there was measure, limit, bound,

Digitized by Google

to that word's death " ; and, in the extremity of his misery, hope whispered again that years might pass, and love not die.

A mind like Herbert's could not long remain a captive to despairing or blasphemous thoughts. He had within him that well-spring of joy which belongs to the poetical temperament, and the first affliction, however terrible, could not turn its waters to gall. He was not made for suffering. I know not how to express my meaning ; but there are natures to whom suffering and anguish are certain death ; they are guarded, therefore, like the tender shell-fish, with a case of adamant. A ray of light instantly dawns upon the darkness that wraps them. Like the sun in northern latitudes, its rim does but sink beneath the horizon ; no night comes upon the soul, but only a softened and soothing darkness for an instant, and, behold ! the whole orb again is light. Of them it may be said, — " Sorrow endureth for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

In the morning, hope had returned to the soul of Herbert. He could once more behold Naomi, and that moment might be the happiest of his life.

The morning was dark and lowering ; thick clouds hung low over the horizon, and sudden gusts of wind, that blew the already drifted snow into the air, threatened a wintry tempest. The storm, if it came, would not detain Naomi. The vessel was rocking, anchored in the stream ; and if a boat could live, the shelter of that vessel was Naomi's refuge.

When Herbert arrived at the house of Mr. Aldersey, he found the ministers there. In all afflictions, public or domestic, the ministers must consecrate them with prayer. Naomi's step-father, in his secret heart, was certainly not grieving at the calamity of his step-daughter. Publicly,

Digitized by Google

in the eyes of the church and of his fellow-citizens, he was the martyr; he was the afflicted one. Heresy had been found under his roof. He was thrusting his pride-fed, but sanctified, face forward, and saying to every one, —"Pity me, pity me, O my friends! for the hand of the Lord hath touched me"; while the real martyr, she who had sacrificed *all* rather than lie to her own soul, was but a secondary object. The lamb of the sacrifice, indeed, she was, while the priest and the formalist stood coldly or hypocritically by.

While the domestic services were proceeding, the storm had increased to the most terrific height. Sometimes the snow and rain mingled together fell perpendicularly, and heaped itself upon every door-step and upon every window-sill, leaving there a virgin offering; then a sudden and violent gust from the east dispersed these heaps, and mingled the snow that had already fallen with the descending sheets, and all was a grand and indistinct mingling of the elements.

The trees in the front-yard were already loaded, and, with outstretched arms, looked like sheeted ghosts, come to repeat upon the exiled Naomi the sentence of banishment pronounced by living spirits.

The gusts of the storm rolled fearfully in the chimney, and shook the windows, as sheets of sleet and snow were hurled by the wind against them. The few travellers in the streets wrapped themselves closely in their cloaks; but from every turning, and from every narrow lane, came a blast that nearly blinded them, and a heavy wind that nearly laid them prostrate.

As the prayers were finished, and those assembled in that room turned to look on each other for the last time, every face was pale with anguish. The servants sobbed, and Sambo, whose poor old eyes were bleared with

Digitized by Google

weeping, tottered towards Naomi and stood close behind her. The ministers gave her their mournful, and perhaps, at this moment, their relenting farewell. Did they recall the hour when, in that very room, scarcely more than a year ago, they had called her *Naomi the beautiful*, and entreated her never to become *Mara* to them? They had now been praying to the Almighty that she might not be for ever a castaway, but, even at the eleventh hour, like a brand snatched from the burning.

Naomi alone stood there in all the calmness and beauty of innocence. No tear dimmed the deep light of her eye, and no cloud rested upon her serene brow. "My friends," she said, "let no regrets follow my departure. I would fain believe, that what you have done has been done for conscience' sake. Let us leave the issue with God."

Mr. Wilson, who had been always secretly her friend, now laid his hand upon her head, and said, — "The Lord forgive us if we have done thee wrong, and remember not our sins against his church and his people!"

Mr. Aldersey's carriage was at the side-door, waiting to convey Naomi to the boat. Mr. Aldersey himself was preparing to accompany her; Faith also stood ready for this last sorrowful, but short, journey. Herbert had pressed always nearer and nearer to Naomi. Their eyes had often spoken, their hearts more often. Herbert preserved a calm exterior, although the tempest in his breast was like that which raged without. Who does not remember to have seen a tempest raging with such violence, that the surface of the ocean has been kept calm and the billows from rising, — the contention of waves and winds keeping the surface smooth? Such was the conflict in Herbert's breast, that a stern and iron calm appeared on the exterior.

Digitized by Google

Naomi was ready to enter the carriage, but as her step-father followed close behind, apparently intending himself to render her this last service, she turned and gave him one look. Whatever there was in that look that penetrated to his inmost heart, he turned, and, retreating to the parlour, made no effort to go further. Faith, with the quick instinct of woman, motioned to Herbert to take the vacant seat. He had, indeed, determined before, that, within or without, no power should separate him from Naomi till they reached the vessel; but now he instantly obeyed, and placed himself by the side of Naomi. Then, and not till then, their hands joined, and Faith alone witnessed the anguished joy of that long embrace.

Slowly, step by step, they proceeded to the wharf. The streets were much blocked by snow-drifts, and at every turn and every corner they met a terrific blast, that drove the sleet against the carriage-windows and shut out every object but that of the white, accumulating snow. To the lovers, this protracted and storm-beaten transit, these few moments of blissful confidence, were a season of inexpressible happiness. It opened a living fountain of joy in both their hearts, from which was spanned across their tear-filled sky the heavenly bow of promise, uniting the bitterness of this parting hour with the sunshine of future years.

As they sat clasped in each other's arms, Faith — the noble and true-hearted friend — folded her hands in inward prayer. That silent prayer was perhaps the only one that reached the throne of God, and drew down upon this perfect union of their young hearts the bliss of perfect faith in each other, and trust in God, that never failed through long years of absence.

All too soon they reached the wharf. Dangerous as was the passage to the vessel, it was for each of them

Digitized by Google

a salutary fear, absorbing every faculty and every thought, and leaving no place for the anguish of parting. That, like the anguish of death, was past ere the straining eyes of Herbert or Faith were turned from Naomi's fluttering garments as she ascended the side of the vessel, and every outline was lost in the confused mingling of sleet and snow.

The last object that was visible to Naomi was Sambo, standing upon the extreme end of Long Wharf, his body bent forward, his white head bared to the storm, and holding in each hand a handkerchief, which he waved in token of his farewell. Naomi had been calm till then ; but this simple expression of the attachment of her humble friend went straight to her heart, and she burst into an agony of tears.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CONCLUSION.

THE next morning's sun, as though in mockery of the woe of the preceding evening, rose upon a cloudless sky. The storm had ceased, the winds had hushed themselves to repose during the hours of darkness, the black, impenetrable cloud had rolled away, and when Herbert, at the earliest dawn, looked out upon the bay and the broad waters beyond, the vessel that bore Naomi away had spread her white wings, and fluttered now upon the extreme horizon.

The sun shone from a pale blue, serene, and cloudless sky, over the broad fields of spotless, new-fallen snow. The rain descending in the latter part of the night had frozen in glittering drops, and hung the whole earth with wreaths of diamonds. How did this gorgeous splendor, hollow and cold, and this soft, blue sky, that was fitted to smile on the tenderest love, the purest joy, — how did they mock those mourning hearts that bled inwardly, drop by drop, and that would never cease to bleed till the anguish of years of absence was lost in the joy of a reunion!

That this reunion of the two young hearts that have formed the principal point of interest in my story did take place, at no very distant day, we are assured by the family records and the government archives of a neighbouring State. Among those Quakers who came, six years after the date of our humble narrative, to settle

Digitized by Google

the beautiful State of New Jersey, and to enjoy "its liberal and paternal government," were Herbert and Naomi Walton.

Naomi, after her return to England, associated principally with the followers of George Fox and William Penn. The more intimately she became acquainted with the pure principles, the holy lives, and the simple, but sufficient, faith of that persecuted, but noble sect, the more fervently did she bless God that she had been able while in New England to preserve the simplicity of her faith, and to separate it from the irrational and mischievous raving of those wild fanatics with whom she had there been confounded. She looked back, indeed, upon this infancy of her religious life, as though she had been but a babe in knowledge; but the essential faith of the Quakers she had then, amid imprisonment and obloquy, been able firmly to hold, and grapple it to her heart and conscience, — "The sensible and constant direction of the spirit of God in man." She had since added to this essential faith the instruction and the graces of a full-grown Christian. Humility continued to form the foundation of her character, upon which had been built the beautiful proportions of Christian grace, forming an harmonious whole, lovely to look upon, comforting and elevating to those who lived within the shadow of her blessed influence.

And Herbert, — his was a severer trial, to sustain unharmed the assaults that were made upon the integrity of his faith, the constancy of his love. But he, too, experienced the omnipotence of truth. He waited patiently in the darkness, tarrying for the dawn. Truth and justice came at length. He waited not in vain. Found faithful to the last, I leave to my young readers to imagine the bliss that attended his reunion with Naomi.

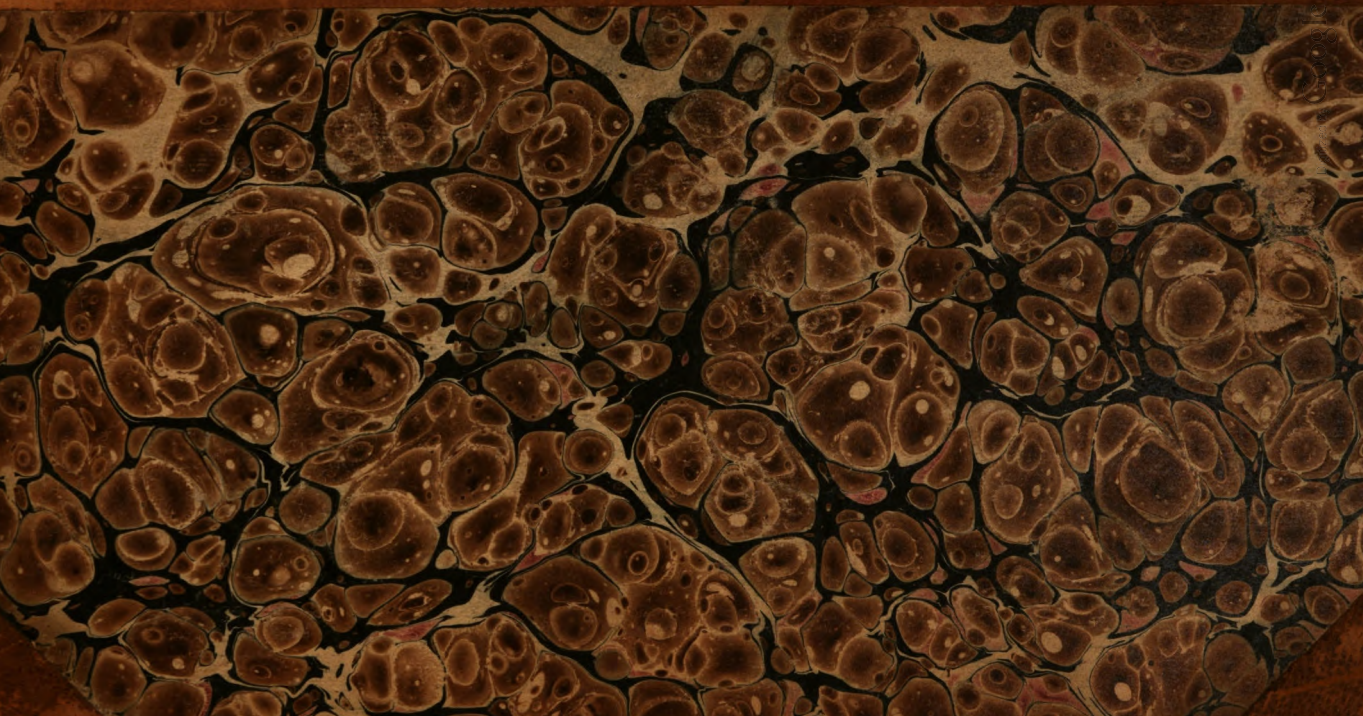
THE END.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google